

THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

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Sheila
Chandra
*Queen
of drones*

*Japan's furry
freak brothers*
Keiji Haino,
Magical Power Mako

DJ Shadow
Turbulent terrorist

John Cale's
jukebox

Trans Am

Roger Eno

David Cunningham

Spleen

*NYC
Ambient*

The Fall

legends of the holy drinker

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JDN MCX TUCKER'S FROST CLOSING CLOSING CLOSING MCX

FRISKY? TRACKLISTING

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LOGICAL PROGRESSION TRACKLISTING - CONTAINS UNRELEASED MATERIAL

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Next Month's Wire



Good grief! They're changing the logo!

That's right. After all this time we finally got bored of looking at that old Wire logo every month, stuck up there in a big black box in the left hand corner of the cover. So we decided to change it (change being good as a rest and all that, and seeing as we never get any rest around here). So, as of next month (that's the October issue we're talking about), your copy of *The Wire* will come adorned with a simplified but supra-cool new logo — just like the one pictured above, in fact. (Hopefully, we'll find a picture to stick on the cover before the mag actually comes out.) So don't forget: *The Wire*, October issue. New logo. Look out for it in your newsagents on Tuesday 24 September!

Plus FREE Virgin CD!

Yep, that's right: not only will we give you a new Wire logo to ogle at next month, but we'll provide you with something to listen to at the same time — for free! We've got together with those neat people over at Virgin Records and compiled an exclusive sampler of some of the label's most ambitious and exciting current projects. So ready your CD player to receive a storming collection of new edge sounds featuring Future Sound Of London, Photek, Wagon Christ, µ-Ziq, Palmekins Productions, ROC, Source Direct, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook, Craig Armstrong, Matt Wynne, The Lúacs and more! Only available FREE with the October issue of *The Wire*.



The OCTOBER ISSUE of *The Wire*. Looks good. Sounds good
On sale Tuesday 24 September

THE WIRE

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45-46 Putland Street - London W1V 3DF - UK
Tel: 0171 430 6422 - Fax: 0171 282 4762
e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk

Editor/Publisher **Tony Harrington**

Deputy Editor **Rob Young**

Art Editor **Bobin Hansen**

Advertising Manager: **Vernese Smith** (617) 494-1340

Subscriptions: See News (0171 734 3555)

Administrative: Alex Wilson

Founder: Anthony Wood

Chairman of the Namara Group: **Naime Attallah**

Contributors: Sylvester Balachand, John Barnes, Mike Barnes, Dean Belcher, Glive Bell, Chris Blackford, Chris Camplin, Lisa Chiriac, Chris Clark, Richard Cook, John Corbett, Peter Celishev, Brian Dagnall, Phil England, Kodwo Eshun, Mark Epstein, John Eversall, Matt Fytche, Louise Gray, Andy Hamlin, Steve Holt, Elaine Hopkins, David Hill, Tom Keel, Rebekah Khazam, Nick Kimberley, Edna Kent, Art Lange, Howard Marsdel, Peter McIntyre, Andy Miller, Will Montgomery, John O'Connell, John Peasner, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Robin Richmond, Jonathan Romney, Paul Schutte, Richard Scott, Peter Shapiro, Chris Sharp, Mark Siskind, Paul Stamp, Julie Taraska, David Teep, John L. Walters, Ben Watson, Barry Withers.

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Cover photographer **Adam Lawrence**

editor's idea

Put it down to synchronicity, coincidence, or an over-active imagination, but something strange is going on. In recent issues of *The Wire* it has come to my attention that certain subliminal themes have been emerging unbidden from the commissioned editorial contents, binding them together like some kind of freak journalistic super glue. Hermetic notions propagated in the far flung corners of the magazine suddenly rise up and cohere, from out of nowhere, into subconscious, mutually supportive strands of thought independent of any over-arching editorial agenda. These complementary notions, often as unfamiliar as they are unexpected, always seem to be issue-specific, in that they disappear as quickly and mysteriously as they arrived (ie with the next copy of the magazine). Of course, now that I've mentioned this phenomena I can't actually think of any examples from past issues to support it (maybe I should start a file to document this stuff—an X-File, perhaps). But no matter it's haunted again this month, so let's get specific

Appropriately, the phantom link that has floated up from the depths of *The Wire*'s collective unconscious to connect a significant proportion of this issue's contents is magic (that's 'magic' the noun, rather than the Selwyn Froggitt-favoured adjective). Mark E Smith, Ke\$ha, Shelia Chandra, Magical Power Makó (inevitably) and even Roger Eno all talk, literally or otherwise, about the role that magic plays in their music. Maybe I should quickly expand on that statement and use of the word 'magic', lest anyone reading this before they get to the rest of the magazine should think the world of new music has been colonised by the Puff Dadders fan club.

In varying degrees, these five musicians all seem to tilt towards the belief that their music has properties, or emerges via processes, analogous to cabalistic systems. Key Haino comes right out with it, suggesting that his work articulates the ancient, internal battle between the forces of light and darkness. For Magical Power Mako, music is more a conduit to access psychic networks and even communication with alien

Intelligences. In *Shelja Chandra*, drones are sonic changelings, their mesh of occult (as in invisible, hidden) harmonics and frequencies revealing themselves anew on each hearing. Roger Eno suggests that his music is an attempt to harness the mysterious, shifting atmospheres and landscapes of his native East Angles coast. And with *The Fall*, a group that is periodically cited as a paradigm of working-class pragmatism, Mark E. Smith has been attempting to articulate a sound that has been echoing in his head for years, and whose origins are perhaps as peripatetic as the forces that once caused watches to explode on his wrist.

At the risk of turning *The Wire* into a musical version of *The Fortean Times*, not to mention incurring the wrath of rent-a-skeptics such as Catherine Bennett, much of the music that is covered in the magazine each month connects with the most esoteric sources. Think of Sun Ra, astrally projecting onto other planes of there, the mystical energies harnessed by the compositions of Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Hessel's journeys through the Fourth World (and all the musicians that follow him into that preternatural realm), the ecstatic quest for psychic transcendence that drove the music of John Coltrane and Albert Ayler, the alchemical properties of digital sampling technology and hard disc editing, the spirit worlds invoked by dub's echo chamber odysseys, the lucid dreams of Richard James, marathon and rhapsodic trance music, ceremonies conducted by Fela Kuti, Nazrat Faten Al Khori, Terry Light, Mjezi! pop! All these musicians and musics take flight from temporal and spatial imperatives in an attempt to access worlds which refuse to be explained away by plain-speaking.

Which brings me, coincidentally, to a point made by one Wire reader on this month's Letters page, who complains of being bewitched by the 'arcane phraseology used by your magazine'. I'll ignore the implication that all The Wire's contents can be corralled together in a single, negative generalisation, but that bit about 'arcane phraseology'? Sorry, but the music we cover demands nothing less. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The October Issue of *The Wire*

You wanna know what's going on with the next issue of the only music mag that matters? Well, have a look at the page opposite. We're up to stuff!

On sale Tuesday 24 September

soundings september

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts



AMM's Keith Rowe

Festivals/Seasons

Unknown Public Holiday First all-day event organised by those tireless champions of New Music (in a plain brown box) at Unknown Public. The UP crew are occupying the QEH and its foyer at London's South Bank for a day, headlining the evening session is the UK debut of Dave Stewart & Barbara Gaskin (H), Billy Jenkins And The Voice Of God Collective, and VOGC with Django Bates, Ian Ballamy and Steve Argüelles. There's an afternoon sequence featuring performances by Roger Heaton, Regular Music II, Mike Henry, Nicolas Collins, Melanie Pappenheimer, meanwhile, foyer sounds are projected from the maxUP quad sound system, broadcasting electroacoustic works by Trevor Wishart, Terry Edwards, Frank Zappa, Ian Djeandri, Jonathan Harvey and Michael Parsons. In addition, UPmarket provides a 'creative souk' for independent CD companies to sell their wares. 28 September, noon-11pm, £20/\$16 (all day), £12.50/\$10.50 (even), £10/\$8 (afternoon), 0171 960 4242

Moving On Music Festival

Excellent line-up confirmed for this two-day experimental music event in Belfast (6-7 September). The first night features saxophonist Ian Ballamy's Hungry Ants, plus local The Jerome Sabbagh Quartet and DJ Dave Shaw. Saturday is the big one, with metamusicians AMM live, and a guest residence by London's Big Chill club, which includes performances by Talvin Singh, Spring Heel Jack, DJ Pete Lawrence and Heatside visuals. Belfast Crescent Arts Centre, 8.30pm, £10 (Fri/9pm, £8 (Sat, AMM only). Big Chill at the QUB Snack Bar, 9pm-late, £10. Tickets from 01232 242338

FutureSonic Multimedia symposium and club event co-hosted by Leeds University's Thinking Alien conference and the city's Back To Basics club. Panel discussions featuring leading musicians, journalists and academics run in parallel with club spaces in residence. Haywire with Cristian Vogel, Andrew Weatherall and Oz Quaye, and The Sprawl with Scanner, Si-cut-

db, Brifonic, The Wire Sound Systems, Mat Consume, Matt Black, and NineBar Records. In addition, Kaffe Matthews will be demonstrating her Magic MIDI Violin, and various interactive music machines will be on trial. Leeds Back To Basics, 17 September, 1pm-6am, £12/\$8 (day pass), \$4 (Haywire only), booking on 01524 382292. For info on the Web, go to <http://www.phreak.co.uk/haywire/>. FutureSonic

The Visible And The Invisible Yoko Ono contributes an installation to this collection of works set around the Euston area of Central London. Yoko's piece is a revolving Ultrasonic hoarding containing a reworked still from her 1966 film *No. 4 (Bottoms)*. To check out this example of bare-faced cheek, visit the Friends' House, Euston Road, 21 September-26 October. Admission to all sites is free. Details on 0171 636 1930

On Stage

Amos Dool II Rehabilitation of the Krautrock mystic improvisors continues, their *Nada Moonshine* LP is just out in the UK on Mystic Records. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 21 September, 7pm, £10, 0181 740 7474

Hugh Davies Audio research by the veteran electronic improviser and instrument inventor. London 213 Club, Stoke Newington Church St, N16, 7 September, 21.3pm, £3.12/\$2.13, 0171 254 2405

Footus Rescheduled and only UK show this year by notorious Jim Thirlwell, supported by Ohs and Leechwoman. London LA2, 24 September, £8.50/\$7.50, 7pm, 0171 434 0403

Little Axe New single, album and London date for Skip McDonald's blues dubologists. London Jazz Cafe, 3 September, 8pm, £8, 0171 916 6000

Master Musicians Of Jounjouka The Hanni tribe, with their ancient Moroccan trance music, on tour in the UK. Frome One World Festival (31 August), Aberdeen Lemon Tree (7 September), London Briton Fringe (12), Dublin Olympia Theatre (13), and Brighton Conference Centre (16). More dates to be confirmed

Musica Transonica Asanito Nango's maximalist noise assault, too make a bid



Tortoise

for world domination. London Upstairs at the Garage (25 September), Glasgow venue tbc (26). Contact 0171 608 2767 for details. Nango also appears with Manliner at this month's Sausage Machine (see Club Spaces)

Bob Ostertag/Phil Minton First UK appearance by composer/sampler/improviser Ostertag, with vocalist Minton. London ICA, 8 September, 7.30pm, £7.55, 0171 930 3647

John Parish & Polly Harvey Advance warning of only two gigs this year by the duo about to release their *Dance Hall At Louse Point LP*. The group includes Spleen's Rob Ellis, Bristol Fleece & Fink, 8-9 October, £7, 0171 929 9008

Evan Parker Solo sax set, plus improvisations by Alfredo Genovesi and

Hilary Jeffery (trombonist on Gerni's *Parrot*, fact fans) London Priory Arms Club, Stockwell, SW8, 20 September, 8.30pm, £4/£3, 0181 809 4504

Courtney Pine + Chris Bowden + Lewis Taylor Three-headed showcase for London Fourth-Sound soul jazzers London Forum, 6 September, £12/£10, 0171 284 2200

Red Snapper UK tour by live jazz/hip-hop outfit promoting their new Warp LP, *Prince Bimney St Agnes Surfers Against Sewage Ball* (6 September), Newcastle Riverside (12), Dundee The Zone (14), Glasgow King Tut's (15), Leeds Cockpit (17), Norwich Waterfront (18), Reading Alcega (19), Bristol Loco (22), Sheffield Leadmill (24), Brighton Concord (25), London Subterania (26), Manchester Sany's Soap (29) Different guest DJs play on all dates

Steve Reich Celebratory concert by Reich's Ensemble in honour of the

minimalist's 60th birthday Works include *Electric Counterpoint*, *Severst* and *Drumming* London RHH, 30 September, 7.30pm, £24-£10, 0171 960 4242

Tim Sherman Acoustic alchemy and raw roots from a unique Jamaican voice and his excellent six-piece London Jazz Cafe, 4 September, £10/£8, 0171 916 6000

Sonomeer 2 Lo-fi acoustic multiplayer mayhem from the Sutton Sound System and arrangers: Graham Halliwell and Richard Sanderson London Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7, 29 September, 8pm, £5/£4, 0171 263 7265

Tortoise + Flying Saucer Attack Post-rock vibes at the Chicago outfit's last UK show of the year, supported by a reformed Flying Saucer Attack, Snow Pany and Klute London Camden Ballroom, 5 September, £7.50, 0171 734 8932

Club Spaces



Beat Weir Guest weirdies include Andy Currier from *Emissions* (1 September), Headlins with Howie 8 (8), Saint Records (15), Radio 1's Annie Nightingale (22), and Andrea Parker (29) London Jazz Bistro, Sundays, 7pm-12.30am, £2, 0171 736 8112

London Calling Quality Of Life present a multimedia happening, networked live on the Web (<http://www.qualityoflife.net>), with appearances by L.U. Bukom, Giles Peterson, Fabio, Pressure Drop and more London Arches, 7 September, 10pm-4am, £15/£12, 0171 287 1887

The Molting Pot New weekly night hosted by the Rumpus Room's Merry

Pranksters, with a different flavour — dub, funk and afro jazz — but the same good taste London Jazz Bistro, Thursdays, £3, 0171 236 8112

Movement New night for experimental Hardstep and drum 'n' bass, with DJs on rotation including Ed Rush, Trace, BLIMP, Roni Size, Krust, DJ Die and more London Embargos, 5338 King's Road, Mondays fortnightly from 2 September, 9pm-late, £5, 0171 222 5542

PM Scientists Guest DJs at intimate East End venue include J Majk (4 September), Fabio + Subject 13 (11), DJ Ole (18) and Mr Craft (25) London Jazz Bistro, Wednesdays, 10pm-2.30am, £4/£3, 0171 357 0004

Prana Second birthday bash for the eclectic Manchester club, with the live debut of Lamb, Spring Heel Jack, special guest DJ and resident Prana jocks Manchester NIA Centre, 21 September, 9pm-2am, £8, 0161 227 9254

Sausage Machine Post-rock club that "plays disgusting music" Comm' are Ganger + Gauge + Third Eye Foundation DJs (30 August), Soul State Sound System including Tortoise DJs (6 September), and a Jap nosecone double-bill with Manliner + Togo Sara (27) London Hope And Anchor, Upper Street, N1, Fridays, prices vary, details 0171 354 1312

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1

One to the Jungle (Friday) 10pm-midnight Guest DJs provide hour-long breakfast mix

John Peel Saturdays 5-9pm, Sundays 8-10pm The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno Jungle, Electronic, club and the legendary sessions

Anne Nightingale Saturdays 2-4am Chilled-out electronic sounds for the after-club set

Andy Kershaw Sundays 10pm-12am World Music from all quarters, folk, roots, reggae and more

BBC Radio 3

Phong H Mondays 10.45-11.30pm Mark Russell and Robert Sandall's neurological selection of avant garde rock, jazz, contemporary classical, etc Includes a studio session from London Techno-Jungle Future (3 September)

Now And Then Fridays 10-12am Contemporary music, magazine, interviews, record news, sessions

Impressions Alternate Saturdays 10.45pm-1am Modern jazzers in intimate and on record

Regional

BBC Derby

Soundscape Sundays 3-5pm Ashley Francis plays instrumental Electronic contemporary classical/soundscape music New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Bitch Thursdays 7-9pm Rock, roots, dub World Music, Blues, R&B and more

BBC London

On the Wire Saturdays 11-2am Anything goes in Steve Barker's seasoned New Music mix: dub, experimental electronics, old rock, free improv and more

BBC Manchester

The Late World Music Fridays 12.30-2.30am Dark, psychedelic Jungle, avant-garde, western Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

CRMK (Milton Keynes)

The Gurus Of Family Delights Fridays 7-9pm-Zam Shane Quentin's blend of avant rock to electronic, media, with house/soundscape

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Ruff Guts Wednesdays 7-9pm Latest drum 'n' bass spun by Kenny Ken and DJ Hyde

Q101 R'n'B Thursdays 2-4am Weekly guest DJ slot 4 September show includes live recordings from August's Big Chill Gala in Norfolk

Intelligent Drum 'n' Bass Fridays 12-2am Fabio and Grooverider rise out the jams

Solid Steel Saturdays 7-9pm Multi-disc mayhem from Coldcut and the Naga crew

The Club Out Zone Sundays 8-10pm Paul Thomas's experimental Ambient, dub and Electronic mix

Patrick Forge Sundays 9-11pm Electronic, interviews from out, jazz to Bristol and psychedelic soul

Kiss 100 FM (Manchester)

Live High Thursdays 10.45pm-12am Matt Thompson flexibles 4 from Orkney to Toronto

Da Intakes Fridays 'n' Bass Shows Mondays 8-10pm Tangle with XTC and Marcus

Rob Stone Friday 8-10pm Something for the weekend from the weekend crew

Alpha Waves Saturdays 4-6am Evergreens, exotica and solatronics with Stuart James

Changemag Sundays 4-6pm Electronic and beyond with Alesha's Sean Booth and Rob Brown

RTM (South London)

Sharp As A Needle Sundays 9-10pm-12am John Kennedy spins out rock, dub, Electronic, experimental Ambient, Hip-hop, plus live studio jams

Scratch Fifth session of cutting edge electronics from DJ Spooky, MASS (Robert Hampson live mixing project), and Spring Heel Jack London Spit, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 18 September, 7pm-12am, £5/£3, 0171 247 9747

The Sprawl Luke Vibert (aka Jason Christ) plays with one of his top DJ sets, plus 2 Player (Jon Tye & Daniel Pemberton) Also in attendance SSEYO, lending a helping hand with their Eno-sponsored Koko music software London Cafe Internet, 22-24 Buckingham Palace Road, SW1, 26

September, 7-11pm, £3/£2.50 + 50p m/p show includes free half hour Net use, 0181 883 0972

Stealth Alamyria Ninja Tenso bash, with Coldcut, QJ Food, The Herbaliser, Funky Porcini, DJ Vadim and Luke Vibert London Blue Note, 12 September, 9pm-3am, £6, 0171 729 8440

The Wireless Moves to new location for a special spoken word event, Jan Sinclair, Liz Jensen, John Hegley, Geoff Nicholson spout off over Wireless QJ's soundtrack London Horse Hospital, Colonnade, WC1, 25 September, 8pm-12am, £4/£3, 0171 420 5626

Soundings items for the October issue should reach us by Friday 6 September

letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,
or fax: 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk

Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Illuminating pages

I woke up this morning with pure terror surging through my body. It slowly dawned on me that it was just a dream. *The Wire* hadn't been snuffed out. Phew! The dream made me realise just how important *The Wire* has become. It's literally the last refuge for discerning music generalists like myself, who derive their enjoyment from innovation in music, regardless of nominal categories (most of which are provided by the marketeers, in any case). Tell me to get a life if you like, but each month — just like a pre-adolescent waiting for my copy of *Just Seventeen* — I wait for the new issue of *The Wire* with a rising sense of anticipation. And I'm very rarely disappointed. As part of the disenfranchised thirtysomething generation, *The Wire* has made me excited about music again in a way I haven't felt since discovering people like Roland Kirk and Can in the pages of *NME* back in the 70s. Whether it's Evan Parker or Luke Vibert, *The Wire's* coverage of contemporary music is frequently illuminating, and it's a genuine cover-to-cover experience every time.

The only thing that worries me about *The Wire* is a small tendency to undervalue the work of its renegade UK artists. While Yoko Ono and Tortoise (for example) are international acts who have received considerable coverage in American magazines, there is no such forum for groups like Orange: the article in your August issue was tantalizing, and could easily have been a page longer. The same with the recent coverage of Peter Blegvad (yes, I know he's an ex-pat American, but...) The Peter Hammill and Roy Harper of this world might be considered old hat for feature treatment, but sizeable pieces are the only way to approach people with real histories and stories to tell.

And at the risk of becoming

ridiculously dispirited (not to mention a laughing stock), I'd like to bring up the thorny subject of Prog rock. Now, I think it's time for *Wire* writers to admit that Prog was a formative influence, and to stop being ashamed. Sure, there's some appalling 70s Prog, but it would be my guess that groups like Henry Cow, Faust (and perhaps even early ELP and King Crimson) continue to inform *The Wire's* aesthetic.

And on that rather dicey note, I'll sign off and wish Tony and the team all the best for at least another 150 issues.

Gary Steel Auckland, New Zealand

Check *The Wire* 133 and 134 for our two-part A-Z of Prog — Ed

Object lesson

Thanks for another excellent issue (150). I have a general question in response to your "150 Objects Of Musical Desire": re Miles Davis, 4 Here and Joe Harriott.

A number of Miles's 70s recordings (*log Live/Enl*, *Live At The Fillmore East* and *West*, etc.) are unavailable in the UK. 4 Here's *Parallels* Universe of last year has been deleted (a group who, with all my mercurial of the new and very interesting geek generation of Szaszeng, Squaresusher et al could be argued to be precursors/alternate artists opening out the form), and when was Joe Harriott's recordings last made commercially available?

So what's the deal? I deem these important recordings and want to hear and enjoy them, but don't see them anywhere secondhand — anyone willing to do me a tape?

Colin Buttler London

Difficult music

I am pleased about the Byrne et al debate (Letters, *The Wire* 149/150). I

am pleased because it has finally brought into focus a growing concern of mine with the way *The Wire* now approaches music. Although I do not agree with the majority of what Mr Byrne said, I can empathise with him. I've bought *The Wire* for a long time now, and like Mr Byrne, my main interests are modern classical and jazz music. There is no doubt that *The Wire* has changed in scope recently and now covers many musical forms, like Jungle, with which it would not previously have dealt. I do not believe that the attempt of *The Wire* to access all areas of modern music is over-ambitious, nor do I believe that any form of music is irreconcilable with any other form.

My problem with *The Wire* is that it is drifting further and further up its own arse. Many of your reviewers don't know what it's like to see the sun. I approach music with an open mind. I've recently got into Aphex Twin, Baaba Maal and Goldie, for example. Some of the broadening in my musical tastes are due to *The Wire* and I'm keen to learn more. If your objective is to keep your readers up to pace with modern music, then I find I can't be one of them because of the arcane phraseology used by much of your magazine. I don't understand what's being talked about half the time because I haven't the background familiarity with the musicians being discussed. Preterentious and glossy pseudo-intellectualism really doesn't cut to the quick and leave me feeling I've learnt anything. Why can't you just drop the arrogant, look-what-a-leeson-I've-got attitude? Just relax and say what you mean. After all, that's what musicians do.

Seb Pyte Oxford

Channel crossing

Basic Channel (*The Wire* 150) a few pointed Ether Biba Kof was fed doses of musical disinformation or is

completely oblivious to fact.

I can't say whether Mark and Monty are playing a heartening game with the media but I can speak from retail experience in dealing with sales of the Basic Channel records. I've known as a buyer for a Central London dance shop that the 'new' release "Phyllostrak II" has been on the market for at least three years (I would call that 'recent', not 'new').

Also, within the dance community (I'm talking punters here, not bighead discjockeys with fat bank balances and no understanding of large scale communication with your dancefloor), Rounds 1, 2 and 3 have been the most vocally challenging tracks since Ce Ce Rogers and "Someday". If these soundless unviewed to Mr Koof, it confirms my view (your man owes us).

Given the choice, I'd be happier dancing to "New Day" by Round 2 than any of the bastard child of disco pap, that is by and large more accessible. These guys create a sound that defies criticism, even from your wonderful magazine.

Let it be!

Anonymous London

Shotgun wedding

To be pedantic re Simon Hopkins's review of the JDX File Under Burroughs CD (*The Wire* 148). Burroughs didn't "kill his wife with a shotgun". Doing a William Tell act, he missed a glass on her head and put a revolver bullet in her temple. The shotgun would have blown her head off! He uses these weapons to produce his shotgun paintings.

Dave Grimbleby Southampton

Corrections Issue 150 In Soundcheck, the distributor for World Circuit should have been listed as New Note, and the correct address for Touch Records should have read 13 Oswald Road, London SW17 7SS □

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MAKYO "RASA BHAVA"

makyo

RASA BHAVA

"Makyo, uses sampled overtones singing and going to good effect, and later some jungle percussion and swampy bass which evokes Bill Laswell's brand of sinister ambience."
 -Option

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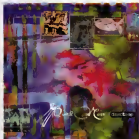
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DAVID TOOP PINK NOIR

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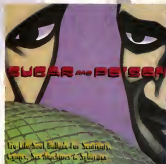
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Figure 2 Picture is available from the following web-site: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/locate/locate>

* If names are available from the following area:
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New York

As performance spaces go, the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage is one of the most subterranean and evocative I have ever had the opportunity to perform in. An immense, dark space inside the base of New York's Brooklyn Bridge, with cathedral-like ceiling and cavernous arches, it's the ideal setting for a Hammer horror remake. Apparently the space can only be utilised during the summer months, as the temperature inside drops dangerously low the rest of the year, so as the mid-July heat soared outside, roasting the New York streets, this was quite literally the coolest place to be.

Curated by Carl Goodman of Creative Time, a non-profit arts organisation that has adventurously connected art and public in a variety of works since 1973, the Art In The Anchorage event presented a two month season of interdisciplinary art and sound works culminating in an intense two week package of live acts and digital improvisations. During daylight hours one could investigate video and sound installations by a group of artists including Rebecca Bollinger, Yau Ching, Pierrick Sonn, and Doug Aiken with Mike Paradinas. One could also sit on a gigantic white plastic

second delay, others spun viral sounds into the mix, cutting and pasting textures into a multi-layered collage that has become recognised locally as 'librent'. Soundlab talk of 'creating an aurora', the gel that one finds in the bottom of a Petri dish that fosters bacterial growth so "cultural alchemy" can occur.

Of the live shows, I was only able to catch the last few events. Elysian Fields opened on the penultimate night with a sultry, seductive set led by the terrorised velvet voice of Jennifer Charles, who managed to create a sense of intimacy in a space generally bereft of such qualities, weaving acoustic guitar and double bass into a series of torched visceral memories. Harmony Rockets, the 'experimental' side project of Mercury Rev, followed with a more enclosed set where motion ceased to exist, the land that melody abandoned, and a solidified mass of saxophone, guitars and electronics. EAR dealt a similar weight with a tapered down live set during which Sonic Boom moved between an archaic synth that resembled an old science wireless kit and a theremin, while his fellow astronauts contributed minimal bass and guitar at suitable junctures.

The closing night party ensured that events went out with a bang. Concrete Jungle spat out the drum 'n' bass with an Acid-inflected edge to an audience

Cultural Alchemy's Soundlab



Vernon Reid

extended chair and chill out under a bulbous white hydropod suspended between two transparent walls with water gently caressing both sides.

Mirroring the installation work was a two week surge of live performances, ranging from the mediated VHS assaults of Emergency Broadcast Network, through The Foetus Symphony Orchestra with Lydia Lunch, Trans Am, Uri and Phil Kline, who carried a chorus of 50 boomboxes around the space with his mini-army of helpers and encouraged the dungeons themselves to ring out the harmonies wrought from the speakers.

The event had opened with a remarkable free party hosted by the Ambient nose of Cultural Alchemy's Soundlab, a full sound immersion featuring DJs Spooky, Olive, Soukinger, Sings and others. 4000 bodies packed into these sturdy caverns which were filled with the fluid folsam and jetsam of environmental sound. Some DJs utilised the Anchorage's natural three

predominantly made up of kids wearing trousers so baggy you could conceivably weave a tent out of the slack material from one pair. Ben Neill played a bustling, brok live set entangling his mutant trumpet with diagonal beats and recessed melodies. I played a live Scanner set spinning in sounds from the ether as best I could, given that I was attempting to capture them from inside a steel and concrete structure, and marvelled that New Yorkers can discuss Yoga classes and the 'internalisation of your inner spirit, honey' at midnight on a Saturday. And Vernon Reid kicked out and then spread the jam on a slanted funk set that brought the live season to a close. Driving away in a car straight out of a *Starline And Hutch* episode later that night, Vernon succinctly summed up the event: "Man, it sure kicked." How could I argue with a man who wears sunglasses at dawn? **ROBIN RIBBAUD**
The Art in the Anchorage Website is still up and running. Go to <http://www.sonicnet.com/time>

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bites

Bob Ostertag

Back in the mid-80s, San Francisco-based experimentalist Bob Ostertag was using tape loops designed for telephone answering machines in conjunction with modified tape recorders. He also created an elaborate live processing system which involved running tape between three reel-to-reel tape recorders. Both innovations prefigured the advent of off-the-shelf sampling technology 15 years later. Ostertag is working alongside engineers at Ensoniq and helping to develop new sound-morphing technology at the Centre for New Music and Audio Technology in Berkeley. In between, Bob was out of music completely for eight years, working as a journalist in El Salvador, and his personal and political concerns still leak through when he uses documentary recordings as source material.

For example, 1991's *Sooner Or Later* "encases you in a moment" in the spirit of Steve Reich's early tape pieces, using the highly charged material of a nine-year old El

Salvadorian boy burying his father. Another recording in the same series, *Burns Like Fire*, uses audio footage from a "queen" not Bob participated in where the Californian State

Office was set alight after the Governor had reneged on his election pledge to bring in legislation outlawing discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

Ostertag is now working on the final piece in what he describes as his "Grief, Rage, Joy" trilogy, using taped laughter. "I went to a prayer meeting in Silicon Valley of a new spiritual movement called Holy Laughter and made some recordings. They're a charismatic Christian movement which, instead of speaking in tongues when they get the holy spirit, they laugh. And I have an amazing tape of a woman in a mental institution restrained by a straitjacket, as well as some recordings of my daughter laughing."

This month sees the release of *Verbosim*, the third part of Bob Ostertag's ongoing "virtual group" project. *Say No More*, an alchemical mix of digital sampling and realtime improvisation. Bob made something of a conceptual leap when he decided to use *Say No More's* concrete-style composers as a score for the original improvisors to perform as a live ensemble. Many people have come unstuck trying to compose for improvisors, but Ostertag succeeds because his composing directly with their material. "My gripe with orthodox notation," says Bob, "is that in order to describe the kind of unorthodox techniques and idiosyncratic vocabulary that are the heart and soul of this music you have to resort to such clumsy notation that you end up restricting everything that happens."

Earlier this year Bob realised his first full theatrical project involving actors, film and lights. *Sparol* is based on the last text of artist and writer David Wojanowicz, written while he was dying from AIDS. In the piece, Wojanowicz talks about feeling as if he is turning into glass, and the piece uses a set of specially constructed glass instruments: harp, marimba, bull-roarers. In a lighter vein, when John Zorn invited Ostertag to do something completely different for his *Avant* label, Bob created a celebratory, hard-edged dance record with six outrageous singers from San Francisco's community of drag queens. He has also produced a CD by a local drag duo.

"I feel like drag isn't getting its due," says Ostertag. "There's so much art in what has to do with appropriation and recontextualisation. And drag is pretty much the original art of appropriation. Since effeminate gay men were ousted from traditional performance venues they created their own and took whatever images they found in popular culture and recreated them into what they wanted them to be. So it's all been done in the drag community since the late 19th century." **PHIL**

ENGLAND *Verbosim* and *Twins* (with Otomo Yoshihide) are released this month on Rosascope and Creative Man Discs respectively. Bob Ostertag performs with Phil Manley in London this month: see Soundings for details.



Trans Am

For a group at the forefront of the current rock/Electro/techno interface, Trans Am are refreshingly down to earth. "When we get up on stage," explains guitarist/keyboardsist Phil Manley, "the big deal to us is that we're in the right frame of mind. We call it 'maximum love vibe'! If we're enjoying ourselves, then that helps the crowd enjoy themselves. I think a lot of bands get up on stage and forget about the crowd or pretend that they're not there. But you got to play your cards right."

Or what? The "dancefloor" empties, the virtual DJ's mood-manipulation maxims having been foolishly ignored? If it seems like the members of Trans Am might be familiar with modern DJ culture, it's because they are. In addition to keeping up with the latest in smartly-constructed bleeps 'n' bloops (Manley lists Autechre and Squarepusher as recent favourites), these Washington DC-area synth-rockers are also enamoured of Techno's ability to change the context of music creation and performance. "I definitely like to play rock shows," Manley admits, "but I also like the idea of anonymous performers sitting behind a bank of equipment where all you can see is their faces barely lit up by the LED lights."

Perhaps it was Trans Am's very rock-heavy formative years that indirectly spawned their collective interest in Techno/techno. Having grown up with both the hedonistic riffage of decades-old hard rock/Metal and the inescapable post-punk squall emanating from their own backyard, Manley and high school buddies Nathan Means (bass, keyboards) and Sebastian Thomson (drums, percussion) eventually found inspiration in the machine-pop of Kraftwerk — a discovery that not only paved the way for later positive Krautrock and Techno listening experiences, but, even more crucially, lent Trans Am a robotic man-machine aesthetic that proved to be essential as the band began integrating keyboards and drum machines into their interactive realtime dynamic.





"For a long time we'd been messing around on the side with Casio keyboards through lots of distortion," Manley recalls, "but it wasn't until 1993 that we began incorporating them into a live performance situation." Despite the development, the group remained stuck on "powersaver mode" for a couple of years while its members finished attending their respective colleges. "For the first album [*Trans Am*], we didn't have many songs, so we had to take some of the best sections from a few improvised jams," Manley explains. "But now that we're all living together and playing and touring a lot, there's been more of a chance to work on stuff. The newer songs are longer and a little more developed."

These more recent sculptings have also benefited from the group's ever-growing electronic arsenal, which now includes half a dozen keyboards, sampler, pad-triggered electrodrums, and drum machine (the latter two elements adding the already virtuosic Thomson in his quest to become a human breakbeat). So it's appropriate that *Trans Am*'s latest release is a 12" EP of hyperthematic and labyrinthine Electronics. Particularly impressive is "Koin", an aggressively post-Aphex and beat-heavy *Trans Europe Express* update that also recalls Hishm's lost Electro funk classic "Al-Nayafish (The Soul)".

Trans Am's next full-length album, even in its currently unfinished form, promises to be better yet. Set for release in early 1997, *Rough Justice* flows between antheimically muscular chug-metal, keyboard-soaked beats 'n' bliss, and a gorgeous Neu!-scape of speedily headmelting proportions. There's even a "schizoid power ballad", as Manley describes it. "That particular song is so much fun to play," he says. "A friend of mine was giving me shit about it, but I like the idea of tapping at the heartstrings of the audience and seeing how people react. We like to keep our options open." **TIM ROSS** The *Trans Am* EPs are out now on Happy Go Lucky, PO Box 44342, Cleveland, OH 44144, USA. *Trans Am*'s debut LP is released by City Slang (through RPM/DC).



Spleen

Medieval anatomists, correctly identifying the spleen as a reservoir of corporeal blood, also grafted onto that useful (though not indispensable) organ, some auxiliary attributes. The spleen became the seat of melancholy, of violent passion and impetuous action. And so it's here where Rob Ellis, multi-instrumentalist and one-time drummer in the PJ Harvey group and Laika, comes in. *Spleen*, his recording project, and its attendant debut album, fully entitled *Soundtrack To Spleen*, is a passionate, violent affair, telling the story of a sanguinary and savage triangular relationship. Cast as a soundtrack to an imaginary film (what else?), Ellis has used the external — here, a music that veers between impressionist influences, freeform jazz and some subtle string arrangements — to reflect an internal action. In its action and its narrative, the end result is delightfully disturbing a crossover call that seethes with edgy paranoia.

Ellis, a Somerset-based musician long associated with the coterie of musicians surrounding PJ Harvey (PJ actually appears on the record, as does guitarist John Parish, Ellis's partner in the erstwhile Yewell group Automatic Dismal), other notable collaborators include trumpeter Terry Edwards and string arranger Brendan Ashe), is intrigued by how *Spleen*'s narrative structure holds together so coherently. "It wasn't envisaged at all," he says. "The record was made over a period of four years, starting off with some sessions with [recording engineer] Head, who had worked on the first Harvey album. In fact, the reason I used the 'soundtrack' word at all was because it gave me a way to use different types of material. Soundtracks are often compilers and I find it interesting to try to make links between the types of music that they contain." He is phlegmatic about possible links between his record and the

imaginary soundtracks versioned by Barry Adamson and Portishead. "The only heard one Adamson and it seems that he has an altogether tighter approach to structure than I've had. I was probably aiming for something much more abstract than [the record] actually is. In many ways it was a way to filter and explore music that I had been listening to. So although you can hear Kurt Weill or Miles Davis's influence, these are not consciously included."

Considering that intentionality has always occupied a place at the centre of any debate surrounding creative endeavour, this is a somewhat disarming admission. What is it that a creator intends? What is his or-text? Did it ever exist? Ellis, for his part, is open to the fact that others may impose radically disparate meanings on his own work. This is clear from the involvement of vocalist Tim Farthing, the man responsible for pulling *Spleen*'s parts into a film script and dividing its action — over a 24 hour span — into external and internal aspects. It happened, says Ellis, in an almost haphazard way. "Instead of writing the normal press release, Tim wrote a film script, with a view to actually filming it, that's something we're talking tentatively about. What he did is brilliant, but he must have seen something strange in the music to account for his interpretation."

Further interpretations may yet be revealed. Ellis has not ruled out the possibility of *Spleen* live dates, although considering the scheduling involved, much will be governed by logistics. What is certain is that the next *Spleen* album, upon which work will begin in the new year, should take less time than its predecessor to see the light of day. How the splenetics of Ellis and cohorts re-assemble themselves should make for fascinating viewing, imaginary movies or not. **LASCINE GRAY** *Soundtrack To Spleen* is out now on Smart Finger (through Cargo).

Roger Eno's introspective moodsongs, inspired by pastoral classics and the Suffolk coastline, have been overshadowed by his more famous brother. Until now. Interview by Paul Stump

"Sounds like Ambient sea-shmores," was the initial verdict in The Wire office on Roger Eno's new album *The Swimmer*. Banning visions of a Captain Pugwash CD-ROM from my mind, I later discovered a record of rather more breadth and depth than this cursory summary suggested. However, the presence of maritime songs ancient, modern, folkloric and through-composed (John Gay's "Over The Hills And Far Away", for example) do lend the music a salty tang. But the curious foreboding that hangs over even the more uptempo tracks suggests a more inchoate vision, and one enthusiastically espoused by Eno. He plays all instruments, produces, and for the first time, sings, in a keening, appealing Nick Drake-ish tone. This is Roger Eno's most complete, distinct 'solo' project yet. It would seem: What lies behind it?

"The place where I live, Woodbridge in Suffolk, it has a real kind of faded glory, with great big Edwardian palatial hotels, and now there's a real sense of decay," he explains. "I was going to base the whole album on atmospheres associated with the seaside, the different reasons people go to retire or die, to go on holiday, to eat candyfloss with the kids, etc. Moods that a same place might give different people. It was a bit of a chore, but what I ended up with was a few of the pieces appearing on *The Swimmer* originated from this idea. There's a melancholy feel about Woodbridge that I really revel in."

There's obviously something about this particular stretch of the English east coast. Vaughan Williams (one of Eno's acknowledged musical deities) wrote his first orchestral *Norfolk Rhapsody* about it. E.J. Moeran (1894-1950) was also inspired by its sombre isolation. More famously, Suffolk provided Benjamin Britten with the inspiration for some of his best compositions (*Peter Grimes* is set there). Closer to home, Eno's bro' Brian drew raw material from the landscape and embedded it in the track "Dunwich Beach, Autumn 1960", which appeared on his unforgettable 1982 *On Land* album.

collaboration with Kate St John and Bill Nelson in Channel Light Vessel, and it even seems to have leaked into Nelson's own more introspective music.

How does this unusual harmonic Lustre develop? "I was classically-trained. I'm different to Brian though, I know hardly any of LaMonte Young or any of those guys. I took a history of harmony as part of my course. I wondered how a musical language was built up. Then I discovered that the harmonic language of Western Europe has been unchanged for about 250 years. Before that there were so many modes. People understood that, and I try and make that my vocabulary."

"Often in early and medieval music you hear modes and simple, pure melody lines, and the odd clashes you get whereby you think everything's going smoothly and then all the voices converge into one knot and wander off again. English music in particular uses this thing called the False Relation — which would be a bloody good title for an album, I think — a serious major-minor clash. It sounds wrong, theoretically, it's OK, and it must have seemed like a good idea at the time. It sounds uncomfortable, and if you know those tricks, you can interpret those when you need that tension. And the other guys I like are what are unfortunately known as the Nationalists: Vaughan Williams, Butterworth, Holst, Delius, all that crowd, and especially Robin Milford. Very contemplative, very odd harmonies, very undemonstrative."

For some critics, Eno's music can be castigated (and unfavourably compared with his brother's) by dint of its undemonstrativeness, its apparent wallowing in effete lethargy. But there's more to Roger Eno than that. As he says, he may not share his brother's artistic vision, but he tries to "lure people into a place of comfort and then break the rules slightly, interjecting what should be a known sequence going off the rails a little bit — not with a harsh jerk or anything, just slipping it in there, so that you're not quite sure of what's going on."

This notion might just as easily apply to the places that

adri mariner

Unlike Brian's music, Roger Eno's compositions have always been rooted in conventional timbres and tonalities. But there is still a pungent and often acid quality about his music that wrong-foots the listener, evoking feelings of rootlessness, of unspecified but detectable surrealism, like those still points in dreams where the full incongruity of the imaginary hits the dreamer. Or like the discontinuities of land and water in the isolated territories of Eno's real and imagined landscapes and seascapes. This is music less Ambient than somnolent. It's evident on "Between Tides", throughout Eno's work with Harold Budd, in his

fire the inspiration behind *The Swimmer*. "I go to Dunwich a lot, maybe once every two weeks, and you never know what it's going to look like because the landscape's constantly changing. There's a track on *The Swimmer* called "Where The Road Leads To Nowhere". That's about a place called Covehithe where the road just ends in a 30-foot drop and people are always having to pack up and move back from the sea. At Dunwich there's an old guy near the cliff-edge whose allotment ends in the sea. Who knows what will go first, him or his garden?" □ *The Swimmer* is released later this month on All Saints (through Vival).

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(Rykodisc RCD 10368)

Varnaline is a band, although when this album was recorded it was only one man - Anders Parker. Since recording this collection of fuzzy, lo-fi pop lamentations Anders has added brother John and Space Needle drummer Jud Ehrbar to the band's line-up.

"crashingly restless, energetically beautiful, like the wheel of *Powervest* and the wandering soul of *After Chilton*, but mostly it is its own testament to the fuzzy thorns of longing." - Village Voice



VARNALINE
MAN OF SIN



Arto Lindsay O Corpo Sutil

(The Subtle Body)

(Rykodisc RCD 10369)

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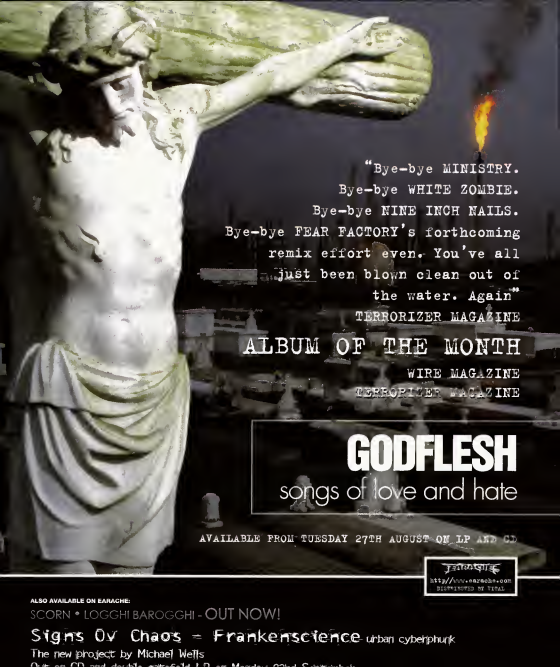
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Dressed in black from head to foot in the style of a 19th century French dandy, Keiji Haino knows how to make an entrance. In another time and place you could imagine him walking a lobster on a lead, but in this PC age he'll settle for a cane to complement the long silver-flecked hair falling midway down his back, his black lace cuffs, wrinkled neckties and ever-present dark glasses. If the waitresses of the Euro-Tokyo cafe, located down a side alley of one of the technopolis's quieter suburbs, haven't seen his like before, they're not letting on. As for Haino, he almost sniffs the air like a cat as he takes in his surrounds. Once seated, he exchanges smiles and words with his manager, the benign, Buddha-like Tanaka-san, and then raises his hand and starts clicking his fingers furiously in what seems to be for Japan, or anywhere else come to that, a shocking outburst of rudeness which the waitresses continue not to notice. "Don't worry, he's not after service," intercedes interpreter Alan Cummings. "He's checking out the room's acoustics in case he wants to play here. He lives just down the road."

Now aged 44, Keiji Haino is one of the most vital figures within and outside contemporary music. It might have taken him 20 years to release his first two albums (his first solo release appeared in 1981, ten years or so after he first started performing, the first release by his power trio Fushitsusha took almost as long to arrive), but since 1990 — in Japanese terms, Year One of Hesse, the new era following the death of Emperor Hirohito — the world has been deluged by Haino recordings. These include, appropriately enough, two *Live In The First Year Of Hesse* volumes, featuring Haino alongside folk-blues singer Kan Mikami and improvising bassist Motoharu Yoshizawa, who was a member of legendary Japanese noise guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi's New Directions group.

Whether they document his solo works for guitar, percussion and hurdy-gurdy, or group projects with Fushitsusha, Vava and Neiuma, each of Haino's releases holds true to a singular musical vision, a vision whose intensity is partially indicated by a Haino title: "Further, Further Into The Twilight." Haino's music is the blues on a Wagnerian scale, where the struggle between the forces of light and darkness is kept in a precarious balance (and the outcome always remains in doubt). In the process he generates a heat so intense it burns itself into the consciousness, not to mention the conscience, of the music world. Haino isn't so much a direct influence on any one individual or scene — his vision is too personal, his guitar sound, in particular, too determinedly self-immolating for others to tamely follow him into the flames — but rather he is a tremendously invigorating force whose life's work is amassing an immense body of music that demands to be reckoned with. Though the great, gleeful guitar racket of the self-proclaimed Tokyo Psychedelic garage underground (High Rise, Musica Transonic, Manliner) is inconceivable without him — you could say his presence both legitimizes and adds depth to it — his relationship to the younger groups is tangential. His position to the rest of the world is something akin to John

Coltrane's, Carl Taylor's or Evan Parker's relation to jazz and the free music scene. Haino's way into the music is through himself, his vision personal in the extreme, and for that reason it burns so brightly it is capable of illuminating the listener's darkest, most intimate hours.

In conversation, Keiji Haino speaks a maddening mix of mysticism and methodology, Zen sense and nonsense, clarity and contradiction. He is particularly winning when he tightens his whole being to squeeze out laughter, or hesitates to express his love or hate of something. Regardless of the fact his meaning often evades ready comprehension, he takes great time and care in explaining himself.

"I am extremely aware now," Haino told fellow guitarist/singer Yoshio Takahashi, of These, in a 1991 issue of *Imperial Theatre Fanzone*, "because I don't want to be misunderstood. It doesn't matter whether you like me or not, just don't misunderstand me. I don't want people to like or hate me for the wrong reasons."

If Haino's music is equally hard to define, its impact is both immediate and indelible. As a guitar player he produces the most astonishing elemental noise this side of his acknowledged heroes Blue Cheer. His is a dense, reverberating mass of sound impacted from wave-lapping-wave of metal screams into which he sears guitar harmonographs marking his journey towards the core of his being. Or else he threatens to engulf the whole in flames of feedback. The noise is unceasing, his songs seemingly never-ending, sometimes sustaining levels of intensity for 40 minutes and longer, with no exit in sight. And at the moment you feel you can endure it no longer, the sound suddenly explodes into light, and what was seconds ago almightily and unbearably oppressive is now carrying you to ecstasy. This is probably what he meant when he said, in an unpublished interview with the American magazine *Forced Exposure*, "The goal of my music is not to go beyond psychedelic music but to deepen it. There are many people who call my music psychedelic, but my concept of psychedelic is different from the 60s image of psychedelic. My music is faster. Unlike psychedelic musicians who stop because of their desire for easiness, for shortcuts, I do not stop."

Keiji Haino has more to offer than deep, enriched, psychedelic experiences. His solo electric guitar/vocal music veers from soul-pulsating heaviness to haunted songs where he sounds faint chords inside a tunnel of gently ringing feedback harmonics, from which his high keening voice emerges, expressing who knows what anguish. They suggest a soul even more troubled than Alex Chilton's on Big Star's broken-backed third album, or Neil Young's sweet, cracked alto elegizing dead friends on *Tonight's The Night*. The difference with Haino's songs is that they're arrived at with their singer fully conscious and capable of making some kind of sense of the despair they encapsulate, no matter how shredded or full of holes they may be. Whatever condition they describe, Haino's words don't dwell in misery.

"It comes from prayer," he tells me, explaining his music's origins. "The ripples from that place and those reverberations then become music. That's what I would like the

black fire

Of all the Japanese musicians now coming to prominence in the West, **Keiji Haino** is the most extraordinary: his music, shrouded in mystery, describes a personal quest of withering complexity and intensity. Biba Kopf talks to Haino in Tokyo, while on page 24, Edwin Pouncey greets the guitarist's contemporary and one-time collaborator Magical Power Mako

best music to be. The reason why prayer exists isn't so much a matter of bargaining for something. It exists because everything isn't perfect, because there is sadness and pain. People have a longing for something and pray to make it complete.

So is his music a healing process, a balm for the soul?

"I'm talking about where music comes from, not how it enters into the world. So I can't really say whether it's a tool for prayer, or how it works on the spirit, or even where it goes in the world."

Rather than the healing power of music, he talks of it as a struggle between black and white magic. Though he's cautious about the description, he believes his music is a "diagram of white magic", but if his effort fails just short, it will remain as black magic, the transference will not occur. He explains his take on white magic thus: "Say if we were sitting here talking and for some reason you actually hated Haino, but while you were talking your hate evaporated and you grew to like him, well there's got to be an equal volume on both sides, as it were. I can't change your hate into like unless there is an equal amount of like corresponding to your hate. Basically, white magic is the power to change something negative into something positive."

And what does that mean, sonically speaking? The way Haino engages in a struggle to control the elemental forces he unleashes from his guitar can sound like the dramatisation of the struggle between the forces of light and darkness.

"I'm not thinking of guitar or any particular type of sound as having black or white magic properties," he corrects. "As far as I'm concerned the black magic/white magic thing will be determined by the listener. The ultimate switchover will be made by him. It is something that will be judged later, as it were."

Come judgement day, the gods have got their work cut out sorting Haino's uncatchable, ever-expanding body of work. Aside from his solo material and Fushitsusha, there's Nijumura, which creates a timeless "global ancient music" using electronics and antique instruments and percussion. Commenting on a Nijumura performance he's seen, Alan Cummings says he's reminded "about something Kuno Kamipuru wrote about Noh theatre, about how it doesn't matter if you fall asleep because Noh is not of this world entirely and so is best appreciated in a trance state somewhere between wakefulness and dreaming." Haino also plays solo percussion or hardy-gurdy sets, and participates in various ad-hoc improvising units (duos with bassist Barre Phillips, saxophonist Peter Brodzmann, guitarist Loren Mazzacane Connors). His other groups include Vasara — Sanskrit for the gods of lust and anger; the combustible electric blues trio he shares with Kan Mikami; and the slow-burning improvisations of the guitar/violin trio Black Stage.

Solo percussion allows him to isolate and explore the totality of a single sound, something the hum of Marshall amps renders impossible with electric guitar. He was drawn to the hardy-gurdy by the simple fact that he knew of no other instrument where the sound is produced by turning a handle. The paradox that guides Haino's musics on these various instruments is his signature, and is somehow sonically inscribed in the very first sound he makes on them. You probably won't be surprised to hear this, but Haino doesn't differentiate between his various activities.

"Everything I do is the same," he emphasises. "As far as I am concerned, there really isn't any difference, because it's all really expressing the same thing. There may be certain changes in what I actually say, I may say something before and something after drinking this tea, and in the course of something entering my body, there may be a difference in the content, but nothing has really changed at all. Basically, I haven't changed since Lost Arafat." (Haino's first group from 1970-71, an Albert Ayler influenced piano-led outfit with Haino's voice standing in for saxophone.)

Change, it transpires, is anathema to Haino. Change equals bad faith, a lack of courage in seeing things through to the last. Popular music, from punk through psychedelia, is scattered with part-explored paths or prematurely spent ideas. Projects are begun and then abandoned for want of will-power, musicians buckle under the pressure of the market place, where the idea of permanent change is essentially a way of talking up novelty product.

If Haino's attitude strikes Western ears as strangely conservative, it perhaps requires a leap of imagination to fully understand what he means. Haino belongs to that diaspora of rock-damaged souls brought up on Highway 61-era Dylan and The Doors. Rock's impact on those young Japanese willing to receive it was as great as

anywhere else in the industrialised world, maybe more so, what with distance allowing for some of the music's daffier excesses to be dumped onboard en route.

Japan in the 60s was undergoing the same kind of upheavals as Europe and America: student unrest, anti-war demos, and local issues like the protests over the renewal of the Japanese-American defence treaty and the pitched battles taking place over the construction of a runway at Tokyo's Narita Airport.

The airport protests, periodically acted out to this day but with considerably less impact, marked the beginning of the end of serious student activism in Japan. From 1969 on, large conglomerates systematically excluded militants from jobs, where before their behaviour would have been accepted as a part of growing up. Once the practice became apparent, potential activists had to weigh up their political commitment against the long-term damage to their career prospects. Inevitably, the majority of students conformed, thus contributing to Japan's increasingly consensual society. And the more wealthy Japan became, the greater the consumer choices, the harder it was for anyone to resist going with the consumer flow. Ex-hippies like the members of Yellow Magic Orchestra took the path of least resistance into the realm of playful postmodern irony that seemed the most suitable, not to mention pleasantly safe, if ultimately hollow, critical response to Japan's rampant consumerism. For someone like Haino, for whom play, postmodern parody and irony represent the antithesis of the spirit, 70s and 80s Tokyo must have been limbo or worse.

If not directly caused by socio-political changes, Haino's public disappearance in the 1970s nevertheless coincides with Japan's slide in to a one-size-fits-all consensual culture. Musically his career had barely got off the ground when the clampdown in the universities and the corporations began taking effect. Lost Arafat had contributed a few tracks to the 1971 double LP compilation *Sanshutsu Genyosha*, which documented a concert and violent demonstration against the new airport. Then Haino disappeared from public view for the next ten years. He told *Forced Exposure* he confined himself to a room in his parents' house in the suburbs for three or four years, studying Chinese breathing and the blues rhythms of Lightnin' Hopkins and Blind Lemon Jefferson. He slowly returned to view with a few sessions, formed Fushitsusha in 1978, released his indispensable first solo album *Wotashu Dake? Only Me?* in 1981, then suffered an illness that kept him out of action for another three years. How did he keep the faith that fuses all his works through the years of sickness and silence?

"Basically doing a lot of thinking about music, and where it comes from."

Perhaps this is how the magic Haino talks about works: his struggle to keep the faith constituted a strand of resistance within Japan and the industrialised world, where peer group and economic pressures conspired to silence all voices and noses unwilling or incapable of consenting to the spreading blandness in worldwide popular culture.

"I am not an anarchist, I am Anarchy," Haino is fond of saying. He expands: "Anarchy, if you are talking about anarchy — when Buddha mediated he achieved sator [spiritual awakening, or enlightenment] — and if the body disappeared, that would be the end. But what physically remains after sator is what was written up by the Buddha's pupils, not the sator itself. Buddha said he's got something that he cannot understand or express in words. My job, my anarchy, which is political only insofar as not being interested in politics at all is political, what I am trying to do is to express in music the sator that the Buddha achieved but couldn't explain." □ Special thanks to Alan Cummings for interpreting and making available his translations of interviews in Imperial Theatre, G-Modern as well as the unpublished *Forced Exposure* article. Thanks to Keiko Yoshida for additional translations in London.

Some records

The Soul's True Love (Purple Trap 1969-74) *Wotashu Dake?* (PSF 1981) *Live in The First Year of Hessei Vols 1 & 2* (PSF 1990) *Affection* (PSF 1991) *Fushitsusha: Live* (PSF 1992) *Nijumura: Enjo Shō Wadings* (PSF 1993) *A Challenge To Fate* (Les Desques Du Soleil 1995) *Fushitsusha: The Cautious Appears* (Les Desques Du Soleil 1995) *The 21st Century Hard-y-gurdy-y Man* (PSF 1995) *I Said, This Is The Son Of Nihilism* (Table Of The Elements 1996) *Vasara: Ring* (PSF 1996) *Most of these releases are distributed in the UK by Harmonia Mundi.*



The figure in the lobby of the Earl's Court hotel looks so incongruous it might have beamed down into this shabby corner of West London from some alien mothership: a long-haired Oriental man in his early forties clad in crushed velvet trousers, leather sandals and a bright yellow silk shirt that is decorated with multi-coloured scarves, beads, plus several fluorescent plastic UFO medallions. "I am Mako," he smiles, flashing protruding white teeth, and for a second the apparition before me seems to bear a striking resemblance to Gong leader David Allen and Liverpool comedian Ken Dodd sharing the same body.

Long before the current crop of Japanese psychedelic warlords and noise terrorists ever picked up a guitar, there was *Magical Power Mako*. Along with one-time colleague Keiji Hano, Mako has been a key figure in the Japanese underground music scene for a quarter of a century. His early recordings were extended exercises in freeform psychedelia that still sound uncompromisingly alien and futuristic today. His most recent release, 1995's *Blue Dot*, continues the tradition of hallucinogenic trance music, swathing it in fantastic levels of distortion, echo and reverb. Another recent project involves a deal between the Japanese on-line server ASCII and Mako's own Keroulet enterprise to disseminate his music across the Internet. This latter development is a key one for Mako: all the music he has produced since his 1974 debut *Magical Power* has been characterised by the incorporation of a personalised psychedelico/technological vision into a hazy take on the realistic and spiritual subcurrents that run through so much Japanese music.

"I don't really like consoling music," he tells me. "Music has to stimulate the brain cells and has to have something that makes human beings want to progress."

When Mako first began performing in the early '70s the ominous shadow of British and European Prog rock was beginning to have a detrimental effect on the Japanese underground. The musicians involved were beginning to feel inferior and tended to neglect their own roots in favour of some shabby copy of King Crimson or

Power, *Super Record* and *Jump*, the first of which featured Keiji Hano on vocals (the two had met in the early '70s at the Nagata Musical Festival). The mood of Mako's fragile but fascinating union with Hano is captured perfectly on both *Magical Power* and the first volume of the *Harmonium* series of early '70s private tape recordings. Both men were boiling over with ideas, and what they packed into these early sessions in the shape of traditional, ethnic and psychedelic styles — sprinkled with a disorientating pinch of musique concrete — produced music that has lost none of its eerie elegance and strangeness. Takemitsu's influence (particularly during the parts involving tape composition) hovers discreetly in the background, and as a tribute to his one-time mentor Mako has included a musical dedication to him on his forthcoming *Volcano Rave* CD. "Takemitsu died three months ago, so I composed a song for him. It is a composition for strings," Mako tells me, adding that the *Volcano Rave* project is intended to be a "channeling ritual with Pele, god of volcano."

The notion of music as ritual psyche-letting has become a central motif in Mako's work, particularly his approach to live performance. According to the Tokyo-based British journalist Nigel Harris, who wrote the sleeve notes for Mako's 1995 *Lo Pop Diamond* album, "Mako doesn't give typical gigs, preferring something more 'ritual' with many different things happening. The *Happy Earth* CD, for example, was recorded at a 'breathing' workshop, where the combination of music and hyperventilation gave the participants a high [The *Trance Resonance* release was recorded in the middle of Shriyuku with dancers and multimedia stuff. There was no real focus to the music. It goes all over the place. But that's like Mako himself, spontaneous and unpredictable."

I ask Harris about Mako's reference to channeling rituals. "I don't even pretend to understand what he's going on about," he replies. "My wife, who is Japanese, read an interview with him in which he talked about this at length. Still she wasn't able to make sense of it. It's a half-baked notion mixing 'psychic networking', 'ET communications'



this charming man

The music of **Magical Power Mako** is a hallucinogenic combination of technological innovation and arcane performance rites. Edwin Pouncey meets a legend of Tokyo psychedelia

Black Sabbath. Mako took exception to this behaviour and began experimenting with hundreds of different instruments, together with an early synthesizer and his son's toy flutes. "For me a child's toy flute has the same value in my music as a Steinway grand piano," he said at the time, and although the toys he now tinkers with are linked to computer systems, his sense of playful invention has never left him.

It was in the early '70s when Mako was working during the day and playing at Tokyo's Jan-Jan jazz club in the evening, that NHK (the Japanese equivalent of the BBC) invited him to compose music for radio and TV. And it was while working for NHK that Mako met the late composer Toru Takemitsu, a meeting that would prove to be as important and influential to the 19-year-old protégé as Carl's pivotal association with Karlheinz Stockhausen. "Takemitsu was surprised when I played him my music," explains Mako, "because I was playing a mixture of traditional, psychedelic rock and progressive music. He liked that very much, so he introduced me to the Polydor record company."

The resulting sessions for Polydor produced three extraordinary records, *Magical*

and sometimes even Buddhist thoughts. I interpret it as an extremely open attitude to the future, leaving out nothing."

I ask Mako about the role of ritual practice in his music, but my enquiry is defeated by the language barrier, the general background chaos of an Earl's Court pub at night (Mako's venue of choice for the interview), and a general impression that he isn't interested in applying specifics to his music, preferring to perpetuate a shadowy personal mythology that has been constructed over two decades of intense musical activity.

"I want you to know that I am from the original generation of Japanese psychedelists," he proclaims when I ask if he is impressed by current Japanese music. "I am the last Japanese true star." □ *Magical Power: Super Record* and *Jump* are released by Polydor Japan, and the five volumes in the *Harmonium* series are available on the Horn W Dad label (for all these releases, try Rough Trade Shop & Mail Order Tel: 0171 229 8541). *Blue Dot* is released by Belle Antique (through Relix). Thanks to Nobuhisa Nakanoishi and Kumi for their assistance with this feature.

Magical Power Plaka and group pictured in Tokyo during a performance of *Channing Ritual Plakat 1*





Vignette #1

His clothes are near-as-dammit immaculate: pale green trousers with plumb-line creases, a white dress shirt, black Oxford shoes. But he holds a large white plastic carrier bag, grubby and bulging with items of unknown provenance. It's mid-afternoon, yet he appears drunk. And on the back of his pristine black jacket there is pinned a dry-cleaning ticket.

"It's like I drunk myself sobers off get better as I get older" — "Spectre Vs Rector", 1979

"His constant love-battle with his goblin-muse always leaves him stronger"
— Mark Sinker, *The Wire*, August 1986

Mark E. Smith's face is a chunk of elephant hide which periodically contorts into impressions of temperance, hilarity, contempt, grave contemplation. Its owner slouches into the red plastic bench seat that runs around the perimeter of this particular corner — a regular corner, apparently — of this particular pub in Cheetham Hill, North Manchester, leans forward in anticipation of further conversation, examines again the two sheets of A4 paper which I handed to him half an hour ago, lets a cigarette burn down in an ashtray, lights another, looks me in the eye.

"I used to be psychic," he says. "But I drank my way out of it."

This statement, delivered deadpan but disconcerting enough in itself, perhaps, is the postscript to a strange and perplexing tale which Mark relates in tones that veer between morbid glee and utter bewilderment.

"I've got a funny story to tell you," he begins, "about the song 'Powder Keg' on the last LP [*The Light User Syndrome*]. It was about the Manchester bombing and all that. *The Sun* kept niggling me up going, 'It's really weird this song of yours 'Manchester's a powder keg'.' It's typical *Sun* stuff, they don't get off the bleeding phone. I'm going, 'Well, it's a song I wrote.' And they go, 'Well, it's funny that a bomb in Manchester went off last week and you actually said Manchester is a powder keg. How did you know about it?' It's 10 o'clock in the morning. 'And also you wrote this song about Terry Waite years ago.' And I'm going, 'Yeah, you know.' And I didn't realise this, but they started insinuating that I had inside information. 'It's funny that you knew about Terry Waite's kidnapping, in this song 'Terry Waite Ser' in 1986, and then you wrote this song called 'Powder Keg' about the Manchester bombing.' And I'm thinking that I'm talking to people like you, but I'm talking to some skinnies, you know. And I'm going, 'Well, yeah, I don't know why it happened, maybe I'm prophetic, you know, because I was a psychic when I was a teenager.' They say, 'So you were psychic about Terry Waite, now you're psychic about the Manchester bomb.'"



mancunian candidate

Since the dark, spiky days of punk, **The Fall** have been searching for a sound that speaks to hidden and repressed communities the world over. In Manchester, Tony Herrington meets the group's charismatic leader Mark E. Smith for a ramble around the Fall world of premonitions, bizarre encounters, and superstardom in Brazil.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES WARD



I'm going. 'Yeah, yeah, get off the phone. I've got things to do. I've got my life to lead. I don't want to talk to you.' So then the fucking *Daily Star* gets in on the act. 'Oh, you're the man who knew about Terry Waine and the Manchester bomb.' 'I just said, 'Well, I'm a fucking psychic, fuck off.'"

For the record, an extract from the lyrics of "Powder Keg": "You better listen/You better listen to melt/It's a powder keg/Retreat from Enniskillen/It's a dream/Busied and coloured/Manchester city centre/It's a powder keg/Sleeping in its infection/Back luck/Confined to the university and the town/Retreat from Enniskillen/Don't want to go/Take me home/Take me back to the safe/Can't get the bus/You better listen to me/Don't you know, Mark, don't you know/Town is a powder keg!"

"Pre-cog is a Fall word," wrote Mark Sinker all those years ago

The first sheet of paper I hand to Mark contains a riddle in the form of a text entitled "The Fall Song Title Story." Set in Croatia, the anonymous hero is an *alt* American abroad, and the story has had certain key words removed. These have been replaced by asterisks. The asterisks according to song titles by The Fall. Insert the correct song titles and the narrative will fully reveal itself. The story originates in the US and is signed: "Chief Saddy 'Unbelievable,'" muses Mark. "But at least he knows what he is." Then he adds: "This one will be going in the file."

The Fall begins and ends with a great sound surfing and reverberating inside the skull of Mark Smith. He once described it, with blunt economy, as "raw music with really weird vocals over the top." Every Fall record, from the "Bingo-Master's Breakout" EP in 1978 to the new album *The Light User Syndrome* — a brilliant, dense, hilarious, quizzical monster of a record — has been an attempt to transport this sound, this garbled ghost transmission, out into our own world. And as each Fall record is replaced by yet another, not so rapidly now as they once were, but still in relatively quick succession, we must assume that each attempt has been a "failure," at least on Mark's terms. Otherwise, why bother to release any more?

"I'm just never getting there," he tells me, his words punctuated by vast, aching pauses. "I'm getting round to it. I'm beginning to understand it a bit more."

Where does this sound come from? Is it an as-yet-unheard alchemical amalgam of all the music that leaks into Mark's head — The Velvet Underground, Can, Captain Beefheart, Peter Hammill, Big Youth, Lee Perry, relics from the original texts of 50s American white trash rock 'n' roll and 60s American white trash R&B? Or does it approximate to the inchoate scratchings of "organic" non-musicians forging audio revelations from kazoo, violin, cheap guitars and organs? Or does it emerge from a stranger place still? "Clairaudience, the hearing of non-physical reality, is used to inform the mind of psychic information," explains Craig Jurulus in his guide to the rogue and vaporous realm of psychic trances. "When inspired thoughts pass through the mind, they register their higher vibrations as tonal qualities." Inevitably, "the more spiritual the source of information, the more beautiful and subtle the auditory experience." But, "if you are tuned into a negative vibration, you will be picking up on those frequencies." The process of clairaudience, suggests Jurulus, "is analogous to playing a recorded tape through a tape player. In both cases it helps if the speaker system is on, or the headphones plugged in."

"The problem I have at the moment is that technology has changed," explains Mark Smith. "I've been through six tape recorders in six months. They keep breaking, exploding on me. Because they're all assimilated into this computer rubbish. I've got a really good one that plays things about ten times faster than they should be."

"When I was a kid," he continues, "I used to have watches explode on me. The watches used to blow up and break. It's very disturbing. They'd get water in the middle, and they couldn't work out how the water got in it. But the thing about psychics is that they always have bad luck, if you study them. One thing I noticed with psychics, and I used to hang around with them when I was on the docks and before, they're all psychic and clever, and their watches explode, and they can say he's going to die over there, but they can't back a horse, can they? I was saying to my mam, because my mam is really into all this shit, I go, 'Look, mam, they can tell you [and at this point the cassette in the tape player I am using to record our conversation starts rattling about noisily. Temporarily spooked, I switch the machine off and then on again, but Mark has carried on talking but who wants to know that? 'You're better off not knowing.'"



Vignette #2

Halfway through the journey he had to instruct the taxi driver, who was ferrying him to the designated meeting point, to double back to his house so he could change his shirt. He brought a cup of tea out to the taxi driver while he waited, but the taxi driver refused it, claiming the tea had been poisoned. He still had the cup, tea bag and all in the large white plastic bag that he carried with him.

"Notebooks out plagiarists" — one of two subtitles for *Shift-Work*, 1991

The cover of *The Light User Syndrome* is free of all but the most mundane information: two photographs of the current line-up of The Fall, track titles, a personnel listing, publishing details, a perfunctory note by John Peel. But track back five, ten, 15 years. Fall album sleeves crawl with garbled messages, conundrums, rebus-like snapshots, hieroglyphs, heraldic retortions, poison pen letters — shards torn from the squalid recesses of the demented city.

"People were plagiarising it so much, I just stopped," explains Mark, when I ask him about this shift in the packaging of The Fall's music. "My idea was just to get people's heads going, because they don't fucking read. But also, with computer graphics coming in, it became quite impossible to do that. If you're on a major label you can't do this [he arranges the contents of our table — notebooks, scraps of paper, tag packets, beermats — into a hasty collage]. You can't do that and say, 'that's the back cover. The computer graphics and the art department can't handle it, because it doesn't fit on the bloody computer, does it?' That was half of it, the other half was why bleeding bother anyway, because people are going to pinch ideas. I remember one guy from Liverpool, this fanzine guy, once said to me, 'There are more ideas on one of your inside covers than there are on three entire Echo & The Bunnymen albums.' I thought that was cool, you know, it made me think."

The dilution of original subject matter via the processes of appropriation and plagiarism is something which causes Mark considerable upset, and not only when applied to his own work. As an example, and in the midst of a discussion about lyrics and novelists who might have impacted on his own ferocious and unique lyrical imagination, Mark offers "Stephen King, who ripped all his stuff off HP Lovecraft who ripped all his stuff off MR James [the mysterious Victorian ghost story writer and antiquarian]. It's a very British scenario really. People pay money to watch Stephen King films but when you look back a bit, they're like Mr James stories. Arthur Machin as well, a Welsh guy, all Stephen King's stuff is ripped off from them. I mean completely whole pages, entire chapters, just watered down."

"There are a lot of American writers who are a lot better than British writers," he continues in very measured tones. "It's like anything else, why are the Germans better at football? Because they care about it. They're not in it for the money. Britain and England is going to pay for all this, I think. Does that sound too exotic? England is going to pay for that. They've always had the inventors and the creators, and they just don't fucking appreciate them. Jim Thompson worshipped Raymond Chandler, who was English. But he was treated like scum here and had to go to bleeding America. One of the best writers I like is Malcolm Lowry, who was from bleeding Warrington, or somewhere. He's one of the best bloody writers, he wrote the best books. *Under The Volcano*. But some bratpack idiot writes a bloody book that is some complete rip-off of *Under The Volcano*, about a guy who goes to Mexico and gets fucked up, and he makes a million dollars."

"It's just like music when you reckon it up. It's like listening to Pavement. It's just The Fall in 1985, isn't it? They haven't got an original idea in their heads."

The Fall used to be signed to the same label as Pavement in America. They left when Mark discovered that one particular executive was having e-mail discussions regarding the group's contract and Mark's "personal habits." "He told me I didn't understand, that we were from the bleak industrial wastes of North England, or something, and that we didn't understand the Internet. I told him Fall fans invented the Internet. They were on there in 1982."

The Fall are now signed to Jet, a subsidiary of the reggie reissue specialists Trojan, and Mark seems happy enough with this unlikely relationship. "They produce these

really thick, lacquered acetates, like they did for Augustus [Pablo] and Lee Perry. I love Tigran, all that old reggae stuff, don't you? Big Youth and all that. Brilliant."

The second sheet of paper I hand to Mark contains an article published in the April 1995 issue of the Manchester listings magazine *City Life*. It is a ham-fisted and derivative riff on the commodification of culture which references Roland Barthes's theories of "jouissance" and radical texts, as well as the films of Serge Eisenstein. But in the midst of the article, inserted like a whoozy cushion, there are a couple of paragraphs about cheese: Camembert, Cheshire, Stilton. Perpetually, the article is signed "Mark E Smith!" It was written by this mature student who worked in the [Cog Sister] office for a bit," says Mark. "He was always writing dissertations and theses." Did you write any of it? "Yeah," he smiles. "The bits about cheese." "Blue cheese contains natural amphetamines," wrote Mark. "Why are students not informed about this?"

"I've cut down on them a lot," Mark says when I ask him if he enjoys the interview process. "You wouldn't believe it, the stuff that's asked. I'll do Wire and that, but I won't talk to them a lot of the time. I get a bit upset. You get people like Mark Radcliffe [the Manchester-based presenter of Channel 4's *White Room*, whose Radio 1 show is co-hosted by ex-Fall guitarist Marc Riley], who want to find out what you wear. It's always the same thing, no matter how academic. You'll get annoyed at that, but I miss people like [former Wire editor] Richard Cook, who used to ask: why do you have two drummers? Or, why is the bass always out of tune? I'm not a musician, but I really miss talking about things like that."

But later, when I ask Mark about these things which are never discussed, he says, "The thing with me, I can't talk about my work. I find it very difficult. So we end up talking about tangential episodes, which might anyway amount to the same thing for a writer whose work coheres fragments of a stilted life into an arching vision of withering complexity, a cantankerous soothinger spinning tawdry metaphors for a present gone mad."

"I find it all unreadable," is how Mark refers to the current UK music press. "It reminds me of *The Daily Mail*. You see, I heard things. If you pick up an issue of *The Daily Mail* from 1981, it's totally the same as an issue of *The Daily Mail* from 1996. You pick up an NME from 1982, you're clearing your house out, I've done my spring cleaning, you pick up an NME, if it didn't have the date on the bleeding top, apart from the print is different and the photos are a bit different, you wouldn't actually know that it was a different issue. Which always annoys me very much, do you know what I'm saying?"

The fact that it hasn't changed?

"Well, they still get things wrong."

We talk about the streamlining process that seems to have occurred across a broad spectrum of the music media — press, radio, TV — in recent years.

"Do you not reckon that at the end that is bad business?" Mark asks. "Do you not think that is a really bad way to approach business? I'll repeat this and I'll repeat it: people aren't as stupid as people think, as the middle class think. It's like middle class revolt, it's going on at the moment, I think. I know this. The Fall will always do all right, people always come and see us, they always pay their money. And you talk to 18-year-old people, they haven't had any education, but they do know. They don't buy the NME anymore because they can read their mum's Sun and it's the same crap. It's my job to think about these things."

Mark has lived in the same area of North Manchester all his life, excepting a two-year stretch when he relocated to Edinburgh.

"I'd just had enough of it round here. I was just so fed up with Manchester. It was brilliant. Transporting was like my life. I haven't seen *Transporting* the film, but it was like that. If a place is really nice, you can't really work. You just want to have a good time. There's a lot to be said for London in that respect, because you can't have any pleasure in London [Laughs]. We did the last LP there, in Brixton, the Dary, off Coldharbour Lane."

The Heat used to have a studio in Brixton.

"Did they? I used to love The Heat, they were great. Miles ahead of their time. This is what we were talking about before. You get The Chemical Brothers, something like

that, it's like third rate The Heat. If some US group had come out with what The Heat were doing... You're always ignored on your own doorstep."

The Wire did an incredible Jukobos feature with Peter Hammill (issue 138), and we played him one of your tracks ["Paranoia Man In Cheap Shirt Room"]. He said you used to correspond with him, and that there was even talk of doing some recordings together.

"The collaboration never happened. It would have been good, wouldn't it?"

Do you like studios?

"No, fucking hate them."

Why? Mark pauses, shifts uneasily along the bench seat to the far end of our table.

"The thing with me... I can't stick musicians. I've thought about this. I can't stand them, and being stuck in a studio with them... I think that's my strength. I can hear what they can't."

"Say you get together with the group, and we're all trying to be friends with each other, they'll all put like Pavement, Sebadoh, REM on, I'll put bloody Bo Diddley on, or an old rockabilly track that is completely out of tune. They go 'It's out of tune.' So fucking what? Chuck Berry is out of tune. And if Chuck Berry didn't do that, you wouldn't be in a job. This is how far I go. But musicians don't actually see that. Not out of malice or sloth, they really don't see it. They don't have an objective eye. All they see is that Pavement have sold a million records in America. Their heads are in a different dimension."

You talk about Pete Hammill. What I love about Pete Hammill, Pete Hammill never had a guitar in his group. That's what I loved about Van Der Graf. They didn't have a guitarist. And there were a lot of Manchester guys who worked in the post office and the docks who thought the same thing. They didn't have bloody degrees in fucking music. Van Der Graf were fucking brilliant. They just knew that."

"There are too many groups, there are too many musicians," he says later. "And they're all in it for the wrong reasons. I'm sorry Tony, but they are. I saw this documentary on BBC2 about Pulp or Blur. They're going, 'We're in it because of women or drugs.' What you fucking talking about? They're saying, 'We always wanted to be like The Beatles, get women.' Imagine saying that to The Heat [Mark laughs, hysterical]. It's always 'Jarvis Cocker would never get a woman unless he was in a group.' So who cares? Good for you boy. Well done. I got more women before I was in The Fall. I had more money before I was in The Fall."

But you don't want to go back to working on Salford docks?

"No, because it's shut down. It doesn't exist. It's not there anymore. Tony." And Mark laughs once again.

On the night that Germany knock England out of Euro 96, the Fall play live in London. The support act is Coldcut, who invited Mark to contribute vocals to the track "(I'm) In Deep" on their 1989 album *Ahead Of Our Time*. If Mark is driven to distraction by the inability of groups such as Pavement to see beyond the seductive surface detail that describes a Fall record, Coldcut offer a more creative line of descent. "British rappers could learn a lot from listening to Mark E Smith," Matt Black once said, and the countless noddies and ciphers which accompany the releases on Coldcut's Ninja Tune label represent splinters of Smith's afflatus reborn in another distant corner of the caustic city.

On stage, Mark brushes into a monitor speaker, eyes it disdainfully, runs a hand across a keyboard to produce a sound, starting cacophony of notes, coughs, head cocked to one side, meanders off stage halfway through one song, reappears halfway through the next, slurs words into the mix from the wings, and all the while a great roar, detuned and distorted, emerges from the barely perceptible motions of the remaining members of The Fall. The atmosphere is electric.

"They've got three different types of currency in Brazil," Mark tells me. "They have like a scambug currency, ie people who work in shops. And they have a currency for people who are like lecturers, journalists. And then they have a rich man's currency."

It sounds like a strange way to run an economy.

"Yeah, but maybe it's honest. Maybe that's why Britain is going. We're like India now, a part of the Third World."

Do you like traveling?

"I wouldn't go [to Brazil] again. It broke my heart. You're having breakfast in the hotel, bacon and eggs. You look out of the window, and there's five kids, black kids, all different colours, one's got one arm, one's got one leg, and they're all crying, looking at you eating your eggs and bacon. I said to the tour manager, 'I want to get out of here, quick!' But the weirdest thing was, on the plane there were all these happy types with conchuros on going. 'I really like Brazil, because 'In Brazil, for five pounds. All these happy types were going to Brazil to help the people in the shacks. It's like India, same racket: for five pounds fifty, you can live with a guy, shag his wife, get all the drugs you want, but then you're helping them out. It's imperialism, but you feel good about it because you're helping them out.'"

I tell Mark that I used to believe The Fall would make no sense unless you grew up in the mid- to late 70s in some Godforsaken corner of Central Lancashire. Except it emerges that there are all these far-flung outposts of Fall fanatics, in Arizona, Texas, New Zealand, Brazil. What does he think they get out of his music?

"You'd be surprised, Tony. The people in Texas, they're a bit more on the ball than the people you meet in Manchester. There are 16-year-old lads in Texas who know things. It would take a music journalist 20 years to find out. You get girls with buck teeth who have been living on farms, they know exactly where I'm from. They understand every word I say. Here, it's all 'incomprehensible lyrics.' There are Mexicans in Santa Fe, they know exactly what I'm saying. Mexicans can't hardly speak English, and Belgians who know my lyrics backwards, they know them better than I do. There are guys from Preston who know lyrics I've forgot. I talk to Jon Savage or [Loaded's] James Brown, and it's 'What's this?' Can't quite understand this. 'Go away.'"

But it was never meant to be about them.

"No, I don't think rock 'n' roll, or music, was ever meant to be about people with specs on or bald heads. I don't think it was meant to be about that."

"I was having an argument last night with the group," says Mark, the group which once again includes Brix Smith, his (notoriously) ex-wife, but not Craig Scanlon, the guitarist who was a part of The Fall for over 15 years and who Mark once referred to as being "more indispensable than me in a way." And I said, "Remember Brazil?" They had a poll: we are the most popular group in Brazil. Their equivalent of The Sun had a poll and The Fall are number one. Number two was their Take That. Number three was like a jazz drummer. Number four was Braxha 6B, or something. Number 29 was U2. Number like 59 was New Order. Number fucking 110 was whoever was big here. You get me? We played Brazil, and this place had like 10,000 people there, but they looked like The Fall fans, 5,000 of them, in a cage at the back, with machine gun guards. In the middle of the hall were all the journalists, guys with specs on, NME-types. At the front—it was just like a caste—all these guys with grandee beards, and their families, and they're all dining with bodyguards. I was talking to some guys outside, and a ticket for the gig was like two months' wages for a clerk or a bus conductor. And these are the people who are in the cage, and it's got chains on it and everything. But on the second night they broke the fucking cage down and came pouring down for the encore. They weren't being violent. They went right through the journalists, so they cleared off, and they ran right through all the grandees, not bad guys, but rich, you know, old Spanish, sitting at the front, with their wives, with these Spanish bonnets, they ran right through them. It was so great. That was about two years back."

But you haven't been back since?

"No, I don't think they want us back."



Vignette # 3

He was negotiating the chiseling geography of the North Manchester streets when some scrawny kids spotted his apparent perplexity, ran towards him, pointing, yelling "You don't know where you are, do you? You don't know where you're going, do you?" He grabs onto my arm as we walk through the municipal car park, and laughs, uncontrollably, as he recalls this

encounter "You don't know where you are, do you?" he repeats "You don't know where you're going, do you?" □ The Light Year Syndrome is out now on Jet (through Trojan)

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In music, drones are elemental, primal, imbued with magical qualities. They also function as a sonic magnifying glass, amplifying the hidden frequencies that surround us daily. This is what **Sheila Chandra** discovered when she recorded an entire album of droneworks. Rob Young meets an IndiPop siren who is going back to basics

DRONE AGE WOMAN

"There's a drone here," says Sheila Chandra, motoring around the room we're occupying — which happens to be Peter Gabriel's private recording studio in the rafters of his Real World complex in deepest Wiltshire. The swoop of her hand takes in more than just the silent speakers, mixing desk and assorted percussion devices: it gestures out of the open balcony door to the surrounding slab of real estate. A river runs through it, hissing loudly over a weir, not far beyond is an inter-city railway line. Every 15 minutes a high-speed train rushes out of the distance and fades back into it, from our static position it's as if someone is flipping the volume control on a section of endless white noise.

"There's one everywhere," she goes on, echoing John Cage's observation about the impossibility of total silence because of the ever-present beating of the blood in the ear. "I hear that scientists have discovered that your staples bone in your inner ear emits a drone as well. So we can't function without them, and yet we've taken them almost completely for granted."

Sheila Chandra has just released *ABoneCroneDrone*, an album consisting solely of six multilayered droneworks. It's the culmination of a trilogy begun in 1993 with *Weaving My Ancestors' Voices*, which was succeeded by 1994's *The Zen Kiss*, although she didn't plan them as a sequence. On *Weaving*, Sheila extended the scope of her vocal material, opening conduits and creating connections between musical continents. By *The Zen Kiss*, on two tracks entitled "Speaking In Tongues", she was letting her unconscious take over, loosing off an improvised stream of global consciousness like a scat singer with Tourette's. Now, *ABoneCroneDrone* has allowed her to magnify the grain of the voice even further. "It's a good third record, I think, because it gets to the essence of things." She speaks of the process as a "sagittist: if you point too hard, or look too hard at the thing you're talking about, then it disappears — a peripheral vision thing. Just pointing is a better way to get to the essence of things than trying to crystallize them."

Sheila's career began with a heavy rumble — her 16-year-old voice was the deluge that hit the charts in 1981 on Monsoon's "Ever So Lonely." At the time, the track's tabla-driven groove and lush fronds of star stuck out on the fallow landscape of the charts like a crop circle. Following this, and a severance from a straitjacketing record contract two years later, she drifted through the 80s and early 90s, releasing four solo albums on her producer-husband Steve Coe's independent IndiPop label. The wayward search for musical and personal identity on those albums was perhaps best summed

up by one cover where she appeared dressed in a biker jacket holding a spanner.

Following a five-year break from releasing records, she returned to the fray in 1991 with *Roots And Wings*, which, like Monsoon, got filed under 'Rock & Pop'. Two years after that she hooked up with Real World, this time in control of her publishing rights, but filed under 'World Music'.

Where do you rack a project like *ABoneCroneDrone*, or, for that matter, any of the other numerous recent records — Bill Laswell's *Somma* recordings of Tibetan monks, Thomas Koner's *Akshite*, Talvin Singh's *Calcutta Cyber Cafe*, Nasrat Fateh Ali Khan and Michael Brook's *Night Song* — that seem magnetically induced towards chronology rather than simply appropriating 'exotic', foreign sounds?

It's easy to confuse drones with monotony. Chandra constantly stresses her desire to reveal the wealth of detail that she hears in drones, to focus on "the experience of the listener between my ears or hearing what I hear." The sounds are not so much performed as channelled, and the recording studio becomes an "artificial magnifying glass." The initial recordings for *ABoneCroneDrone* were made in a deconsecrated church in Bristol: tamburas, harmoniums and vocal tracks were layered on top of one another, and her voice was also played into the body of a piano via a speaker underneath, to get the strings resonating. Further devices were added to bring character to different tracks, such as didgeridoo, bagpipes, ocean swells and bongsong.

"There was a very fine line to draw between how loud the vocals should be, so that people who weren't tuned into harmonics could actually hear the subtle things going on, and how far we were drifting out natural harmonics that occurred. And the other kind of balance to be reached was that when I hear a drone as it's played, unmagnified, untreated, and I hear all these harmonic dances in it and then play five minutes later, I'll hear a different dance. I'll hear South Indian carnatic violins, I'll even hear rhythm. This performance is going on, and I'll hear it clear as a bell, very quietly, and it's in this drone. So, to freeze what I was hearing magnified was also a dilemma, because I didn't want to make it a static, dead experience. So what we've done is layer so many things that you'll only hear some on different systems and some at different volumes or in different acoustic spaces. There are some things you'll only hear on the twelfth listen. And it's like a living experience then."

Since the beginning of recorded time, the drone has been held sacred, both for its endlessness — the sound of the snake slurping its own tail — and because the

Indian Vedic texts state that the *om* — shifting to *arman* in the West — was the first sound, the one by which the earth was created. The 20th century is ending not with a bang, nor a whimper, but with repetition, resonance and frequency cycles, and that's true whether you're a follower of LaMonte Young > Tony Conrad > Velvet Underground > Man, or Steve Reich > Philip Glass > Aphex Twin, or even medieval organum > David Jackman's Organum. In some of the oldest musics that survive you can hear the drone as the backbone: Indian raga, Celtic pipes, Basque folksong, Pacific Island vocal music, Mongolian throat singing, Tibetan sacred chant, ancient didgeridoo. It was the Greek mathematician and music philosopher Pythagoras who identified the relationships between harmonics within drones, and set out his concept of the 'music of the spheres' by equating the intervals between those notes and harmonics to the distances between the planets of the solar system. For followers of Pythagoras, as for Indian mantra chanters searching for the specific vibration harmonic for their bodies, these intervals had a magical function.

Shelia currently lives near Glastonbury, the spiritual centre of old England, and so doesn't bat an eyelid when I drop this into the conversation, and ask to what extent she felt drawn by the mystique of drones. "What I first started to notice about six years ago," she replies, "was that because I was doing wordless vocals, if I altered the vowel sound, I got a different emotional response from the listener. Now that's aside from the tone and the emotion that I was putting into the vocal. I noticed that if I sang a note and deliberately put an octave harmonic on it, then people experienced a kind of sweetness and a kind of satisfaction, a kind of resolution. Whereas if I put a fifth harmonic on it, then they would experience more excitement and potential and possibility. And if I used some of the high harmonics, they would experience discomfort, because there was a kind of discordant quality, even though the tone matched the key. There are these very subtle worlds that you can explore. So I do think there are these subtle and subconscious consequences to using harmonics, and if you can become conscious of them and how they affect every tone we ever hear — I mean, we all hear harmonics, otherwise I couldn't tell the difference between my voice and yours."

“ Scientists have discovered that the bone in your inner ear emits a drone as well. We can't function without them ”

ABoneCroneDrone focuses on these sonic details to such an extent that the performance aspects of laying down the music cease to be significant. "We have this cult of the individual, don't we?" Shelia says, when I suggest that this is the fundamental difference between Eastern and Western approaches to creativity. "We think that there is a difference between skill, which is something anyone can do — a computer or a machine or an educated person — and art, which is the final spark of the individual, and it's the thing we almost worship. And in other cultures — ones where the drone has been kept alive as a fundamental — there's often more of a diminished, more of a sense of a whole unit, individuals linked together as chans,

and the chain being important, of generations in the family."

Perhaps these concerns have led to Shelia's attempt to restate the word 'crone' as a positive image of womanhood, rather than as some kind of toothless handmaid. "The word crone originally did have a very positive meaning, and I think that since the [medieval] witch-hunts we've wanted to disempower the second half — the apparently non-productive half — of a woman's life. She can't have babies, so therefore she has outlived her function. Which is totally wrong, because the second half was traditionally the time when she was the wise woman who comforted people and healed them and

dispensed wisdom, and was one of the village elders, and kept history, and maybe sang the songs as well. And this idea of a woman who has gone from being very physically creative to being mentally creative and powerful was what I wanted to evoke with the word 'crone'. And then of course there's this idea that the act of creation is a sacred act, and I really do feel that, rather than believe it because I've read it in some Vedic text. We define God as 'the Creator', which says something reverent about the creative act, so this idea of an old woman stirring a cauldron out of which will come something powerful, that is the image of a creator, and so it's an image of the divine." Self-mockingly, she adds "It's part of living in Glastonbury, isn't it?"

Although she's been sampled by others many times, Shelia claims not to be clued in to the momentous developments in sampling and electronic music over the last few years, but the existence of other dronal explorers has recently opened her ears to some

of it. "I do like the feeling of freedom that there is, being able to explore things. And the feeling that 'pop' music is this amazing animal — a bit like Hinduism, really. It sucks things in, makes them its own, and becomes refreshed and vital again, like a fire. You can chuck anything on it and it'll burn. And it becomes this really strong hybrid of things, and it doesn't get too cerebral, which is good. [My music] is one way of experiencing a connection, but I think pop music provides that other way, which is, it's dark, there are flashing lights, it's a great groove, and you're just in touch with your body feels, and the emotions that the music is bringing up. And that's the time-honoured way of being in touch with something beyond your personality and your ego."

Wherever she goes from here, it's hard to imagine a record drawing so fruitfully on the tension between transcendence and technique. Shelia doesn't subscribe to any "off the shelf" belief system, yet her whole energy as a singer seems directed towards that elusive out-of-body moment. "It's a shame that as a singer you get too technical," she says. "You forget about the rawness of singing, and the fact that the vibration's moving through you. It's good when you connect with something else and your mind cuts out. But there are still things you lose — well, I do anyway. And it was a big temptation to sing all over the album." The opposite of a drone? A laugh, which she emits at this point. **ABoneCroneDrone** is out now on *Real World* (through Virgin/EMI). The *Indipop* back catalogue has just been reassured on *Caroline International*.



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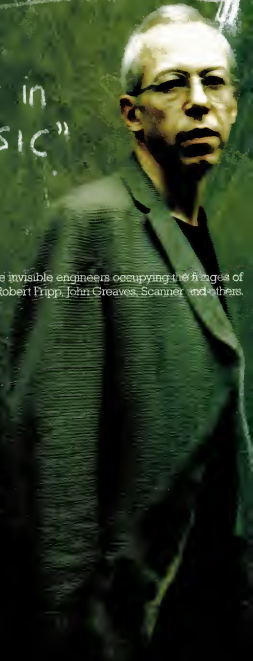
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after

"Lost in
MUSIC"

David Cunningham is one of the invisible engineers occupying the fringes of Flying Lizards, Michael Nyman, Robert Fripp, John Greaves, Scanner, and others.



"I'm not actually very old, but I do go back to recording in mono." I'm talking to the youthful David Cunningham about his attitude to record production in general, and in particular producing General Strike (the duo of David Toop and Steve Beresford) in 1979. "That first General Strike single we had to record in mono because there was no multitrack. The only way we could overdub was bouncing from track to track on a Revolver two-track tape recorder. I can deal with all that stuff without feeling you have to repeat and redo everything. If the machine starts going wrong, for Christ's sake record the result, because you'll never ever hear that sound again. I sit in the pub down the road, where they liberally spread the CDs with tomato ketchup. They keep them next to where they prepare the sandwiches. The other day there was an extraordinary skipping loop on 'The Ballad Of John And Yoko.' Usually you can recognise any Beatles fragment, but not this — it was a really beautiful loop, and I had to sit there and enjoy the moment, because I knew I'd never hear exactly that

audible." It sounds like that, but I don't think that's entirely true. If you think about the utterly bizarre instrumentation that Steve and David would be inclined to use — beanpods and wind-up clockwork chickens — well, I don't know an engineer who knows how to mix up a clockwork chicken. I suppose I used to open up the process. For some reason I'd been recording in my dining room, Alex Balanescu and Elizabeth Perry playing a Nyman violin piece, and the cables stretched as far as the bathroom. So we did a whole General Strike track in the bathroom, including some very dangerous bits involving amps in the bath. It comes out of this idea of having no clear idea what we're doing. And also the relationship of improvisation to studio technology."

Producing Michael Nyman albums (there are 11) was a different role. "I was simply trying to get the stuff on tape as fast as possible, because they cost a fortune to make." So this was more like conventional classical production? "Not really. Originally we had the Early Music instruments, which were pretty abrasive, and Michael liked the idea that everything should sound like a rock band. On the first album you can hear

active

90s new music, a shadowy presence generating renegade soundwaves via his work with The Clive Bell meets a producer going against the grain

thing skipping in that way again. All this very expensive technology, and it only becomes interesting when it starts somehow not doing what it was supposed to do."

After a long period of invisibility, David Cunningham is suddenly everywhere in 1996. General Strike's 1984 album *Danger In Paradise* is one of half a dozen new releases and rereleases on his revived Piano label. Others include Cunningham's collaborations with John Greaves (ex-Henry Cow), Michael Giles and Jamie Muir (both ex-King Crimson drummers), and the solo Voiceworks from 1992. Another of his 1992 recordings, *Water*, which features Robert Fripp and Peter Gordon, has just reappeared on the Belgian Gramme label's *Made To Measure* series. At the end of last year he appeared on *Lo Recordings' Collaborators* album, in duet with Robin Rimbaud. Later this year Virgin will be releasing a compilation of the tracks Cunningham made in *The Flying Loards: Money And Other Love Songs*. And a large swathe of his production discography is taken up with Michael Nyman records, from 1982 pre-Draughtsman's *Contract* recordings to 1995's *Shades, Sounds And Sweet Airs*.

Cunningham has always struck me as one of the most individual and creative producers, blurring the line between production and composition. This is exemplified by an excellent new album *The Yellow Box*, featuring a very open-minded quartet of Peter Gordon, John Greaves, drummer Anton Fier and Cunningham himself.

"I think all four of us went into it with the idea that anything is possible. That's a phrase I remember from *This Heat* (whom Cunningham produced in 1979). They used to say things like, 'All channels open!' It's like a punchline out of *Thunderbirds*. There's a vision for you. *This Heat* as *Thunderbirds* puppets — particularly Charles Hayward."

So is Cunningham a producer or a composer? "I can't resolve this. One thing that I might be doing, particularly in something like *Voiceworks*, is creating a relationship between texture and structure, which makes texture inseparable from the compositional process. It's interesting that Germany acknowledges the role of producer academically [the *Tonmeister* degree], and this formal recognition includes granting legal rights to producers, such as broadcast copyright in their recordings."

Sometimes Cunningham seems to play down his role, modestly owning that on some of the early work he was there because he happened to own some tape recorders and microphones. Surely in the case of General Strike his contribution is very

rebecs sawing away. It gets slightly more muted on the later records, though oddly enough *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover* comes back to a sort of *Draughtsman's Contract* sound. But there's always close miking going on. For example, hearing Andy Finden playing the baritone sax, and the extraordinary shaped noises that come out of his instrument, to sweetenize that up would be. There's a lovely credit on one of the Nyman records for 'Audio Roughening'. We tweaked the mastertapes and tried to push those aspects of the sound."

When I listen to some of the John Greaves collaborations, songs recorded between 1988-92. Greaves sings with a smooth homage-to-Sinatra feel, while behind him Cunningham's keyboards brattle and scrape like a box of Brillo pads. Cunningham always seems to favour an edgy, grainy sound. "In a way there's an aspect of structuralism behind that. It's trying to expose the grain of the recording process, of where the microphone is. If you take the Decca classical sound, everything's swamped in some version of La Scala, this echo that everything floats in, which I'm sure half those composers never intended and would be horrified by. On my recording of the Nyman second string quartet you can hear the grain, the grate of bow against string. You're in hyperreality, it's like a sonic zoom lens."

Cunningham's work typically has a grimly disturbing quality, sometimes achieved by setting up situations which disorient the musicians. "You can give the singer an awful lot of echo in his headphones, so he's got the biggest voice in the world. Which makes him sing differently."

For the solo *Voiceworks* album Cunningham tackled the task of disorienting himself, using a tape delay system and prepared tapes of backwards sound sources.

"If you're working on your own, it's so easy to lose the dynamic, there's no exchange of ideas. The idea of disorientation — it's maybe like having someone there playing with you. There's some feedback within the musical situation itself, so you can't entirely predict what will happen next. Or in the case of the way I'm working with it, you know exactly what you're doing, but you've no idea what it's going to sound like when you play it back. It's like working with headphones on, with a Madonna record going in, rather than what you're actually doing. I must try that." □ Releases on the Piano label are distributed by Vital. *Water* is out now on *Made To Measure* (through New Noise). *The Yellow Box* will be released later this year.

György Ligeti



The reaction to last month's feature highlighting our top 150 Sonic Essentials And Aural Obscurities was twofold. One: what a cool list of people, you lot have got great taste, etc. etc. Two: 'You booze! How could you leave out so-and-so or such-and-such, they're the greatest group who ever stalked the avant-boardwalk, etc. etc.' So, in deference to those of you who wrote in lobbying us on behalf of your favourite muso-types who didn't make it into our original 150, here's another bunch of audio necessities we should be getting our teeth into — how did we miss them first time round?



The AfroC of the AACN

150+

By popular demand: addenda to our 'A' List of 150 music delicacies. More of the artists, groups, labels, etc that lie behind *The Wire*

AACM & BAG The Chicago/St Louis sound labs which cultivated cool, spiritual strains in free jazz from the white heat of 60s energy music. **Ascension** Snotty white punks hung up on amplified black noise and bad attitude. Shocking **Blood & Fire/Pressure Sounds** Labels unearthing lost echoes of the original dub vibration, with nous and intelligence. **Certificate 18, Ganja/Frontline & Emotif** Eclosing Metalheads and Full Cycle, the prime darkside locations for headfuck-into-bodyrock drum 'n' bass. **Iancu Dumitrescu** Romanian classical reusenik forging magma eruptions from piano keys and wire.

Electronic Lounge & The Rumpus Room For the new breed of dubber the dancehall as audio salon, mixing weird beats and waggly treats with some of the most brazen networking we've ever seen. **Forced Exposure & Rough Trade** On either side of the Atlantic, defining the avant-garde aesthetic from behind the independent record retail counter. **Bill Frisell** Rebirthing John Fahey's American-primitive guitar ekeages into an aqua blue ocean of sound. **Global Communication** Aka Jedi Knights, Reload, Link, etc the Nu School of Electronica excellence. **Kranksy** Home of Labrador/Jessamine, Roy Montgomery and other contemporary dronologists. post-rock stars hereabouts. **György Ligeti** Conjuring the most pellucid (theadspaced) odysseys imaginable from dots on paper. **Roggie Lucas & Pete Cossey** Demon tones from the six-strings, they ignited firestorms in Miles Davis's Fourth World electric funk. **Massive Attack & Tricky** Originating a new strand of debauched urban blues, with slacker-melancholy and existential angst as the respective undercurrents. **Asahito Nanjo A** protean figure on Tokyo's free rock margins, transmitting the psychedelick vibration via High Rise, Musica Transonic, Mainliner, and God knows how many other units. **Nation** After all this time, still the only label able to lend credence to notions of 'ethnic dance music'. **Negativland** The original plunderphonic pranksters, now transmitting surrealist vignettes into the West Coast airspace. **New Albion & Non Sequitur** US labels

forging links between modern composition, esoteric field recordings, contact-mixed reveries and other musical bozzerie. **William Parker & Joe Morris** Keeping the queering spirit and unforgettable fire of free music alive on the streets of NYC. **Terry Riley** The all-night chill-out room begins here, with extended tape loop trance induction harmonics. **Oumou Sangare** Electrifying the organic funk of West Africa, and carrying the notion of World Music to new heights. **Sonic Boom** Ingesting psychedelia (literally), and inducing an entire generation into the joys of avant-electronic, so-hi drones. **Stereolab** Krautrock advocates, Ecotica devotees, Francophone cosmopolitans, cool label runners — no question the perfect pop group. **Victoriaville Festival** Keeping the spirit of New Music eclecticism and experiment alive once a year in Canada's frozen wastes. **Vienna** Core-note in the global electronic network, providing a home for some of the most perplexing protagonists in 90s Electronica. **Sabotage, Cheap, Mega, Disko B, Phonotaktik**. **Robert Wyatt** Our favourite apt-drop balladeer, and one of the most open-ended minds in music. When are you going to record again? **Larry Young** If only for *Uniquely* and the awesome *Lawrence Of Newkirk* — making the Hammond organ do things that Jimmy Smith only ever had nightmares about. □ Now which one of you out there suggested *Lawrence Welk and Kitano*? Come on, own up. (That's enough sonic essentials — Ed)

Massive Attack



Robert Wyatt

Oumou Sangare



Negativland



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Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of . . .

John Cale

Tested by Mike Barnes

Born in Gernant, South Wales in 1942, John Cale established himself as a piano prodigy by the age of eight, performing pieces for the BBC. He studied musicology at Goldsmith's College in London between 1960-63 under Aaron Copeland, and won a Leonard Bernstein scholarship to study with Iannis Xenakis in America. Increasingly disobeying convention, Cale began writing compositions that were considered "too destructive" to be played. Drawn to the avant garde, Cale collaborated with John Cage and played viola, alongside Tony Conrad, in LaMonte Young's notorious, ultra-minimal Dream Syndicate which specialised in just-intonation drone-based music. Cale met Lou Reed at a New York party in 1963 and began a working relationship that eventually led to the formation of The Velvet Underground. After recording the nihilistic, cacophonous *White Light/White Heat*, Cale left in 1968. (The group briefly reformed in 1993.) Cale released his first solo album, *Violence*, in 1970, followed a year later by *Church Of Anthrax*, an instrumental collaboration with Terry Riley. In the 70s he signed to Island Records, joining an eclectic roster that also included Nick Drake, Kevin Ayers and Brian Eno. An idiosyncratic series of solo albums followed, including *Pans* 1979 (1973) and *Music For A New Society* (1982). In 1990 Cale co-wrote and performed the Andy Warhol tribute *Songs For Drella* with Lou Reed and, later the same year, *Wrong Way Up* with Eno. Cale has also made his name as a producer, working most notably with Nico, The Stooges, Patti Smith, Jonathan Richman and Happy Mondays. He has also written extensively for film, theatre and ballet, and helped curate a John Cage tribute album, *Caged/UnCaged*. His first pop/rock-oriented album in over a decade, *Walking On Locusts*, has just been released by Hannibal. The Jukebox took place in a central London hotel. The interview was conducted at a quicker pace than usual — the scheduled time was cut by half, as Cale had an appointment to meet Patti Smith. The hotel fire alarm went off just after the interview had commenced, causing a further distraction.

TONY CONRAD

"Play" (Table Of The Elements 7")
It sounds like Tony. Is it Tony?

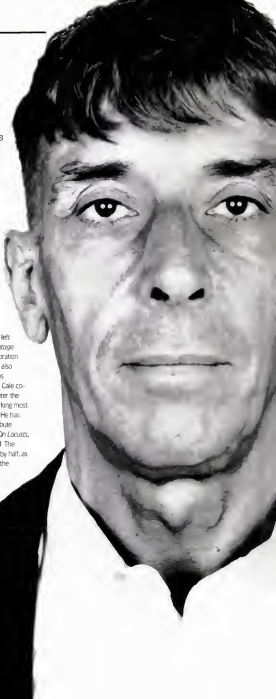
It is Tony, with bristly glaze: Jim O'Rourke and David Grubbs.

Nicely done. Very difficult to do.

What are the technical difficulties in doing this kind of drone-based music?

Well, I'll give you an idea. The Morton Feldman String Quartet is very similar in that it has long durations. It was supposed to be premiered again at the

Lincoln Centre Festival. The Kronos Quartet, who performed the premiere of it in Japan, I think, withdrew because they said that it was



physically too taxing to do. There are physical things that happen when you play just intonation. Things lock in because all the vibrations are related to each other and they fit together when they're in tune.

They resonate?

Exactly. They resonate down your arm and in your chin and the lower you play the more powerful that resonance is. So we'd hold it for an hour and a half. And the effect on the audience was usually psychedelic. People would come up to us afterwards and they'd say, 'Who was playing flute?' [There was no flute] You'd get lost.

Due to the clashing overtones?

Exactly. But that's very well recorded, that arrangement. It's nice.

Conrad seems uncompromising about keeping to his chosen path. This is a recent recording, but it doesn't sound that different from stuff he was doing 20 years ago with Faust, say, or even further back, with you and LaMonte Young.

Yeah, well it's good, because LaMonte refuses to acknowledge that we had any role in the music. He wants everything. He said, 'Well I started off playing this, that and the other.' And I'd say, 'Yes, but when we started playing harmonics the whole system changed — not just the notes that you were playing, the whole system that you were involved with suddenly became adjusted because of the strings. The saxophone didn't do it for you, you were forced to give up the sax and start singing, and what you were singing was a system that was peculiar to strings, and therefore, we forced your hand into that.' He refuses to accept that when that happened we were into jazz and everyone was a collaborator. I've heard rumors that the tapes of those sessions with you and Young and Conrad are finally going to be released after this year.

[Young, who owns the tapes] has repeatedly said to me, 'Let's talk about it,' and then he doesn't talk about it. So I take everything with a grain of salt. There's a lot of it. There's over a year's worth of everyday work, these recordings we did, and I don't know what condition they're in. And destroying a library of effort no matter how abstract or arcane this sort of thing is, it represented for Tony and I at least, and I'm sure it did for LaMonte and Marian [Zazulia, Young's wife], a devoted effort and a labour of love really, because we didn't get paid anything for it.

Conrad has said that this formative era of his life has now been relegated to memory.

But that's all LaMonte. He doesn't care if the music comes out at all. He has his own system derived from that, that he is happy with. The power and majesty that was in that music is still on those tapes he's got and I don't know how to. What more we can hope for from him?

NICK DRAKE

"Black-Eyed Dog" from *Time Of No Reply* (Hannibal)

[Listens intently] I've no idea who this is Nick Drake.

That was my first instinct about it, but I thought, 'No, he's too old sounding.' The only other guy with a voice like that was the fat guy from the blues band in San Francisco [Canned Heat's Bob Hine].

In the 70s you played on some of Drake's records. Did you do so because you liked the music, or was it just a session job?

No, I liked his stuff. It was also a question of how to make a grand. It was right after [Nick's] *Morbide* index and before *The Stooges* — it might have been after *The Stooges*. I was doing a lot with Nico and it was on one of those trips I came over that I met [Drake]. Joe [Boyd, then an Island Records executive] had set up the studio. When I met [Drake] I had a 12-string and he'd never seen a D12 before, a Martin. And you know that very complicated picking that he had? He just picked up the guitar and it was just like this orchestral sound coming out. He went nuts. He was sitting there stunned by it.

What was Drake like to work with? Very introverted. I hardly ever dealt with him. I think it was Joe.

What were your criteria for deciding which sessions to do and which production jobs to take? They cover an extremely wide range of music.

Well, who I knew. I knew Joe Boyd. I was fresh out of the VU anyway, and I'd done *Nick Drake* and I was interested in producing. And one other way of developing what I did with *Morbide* index was to do Nick Drake and *The Incredible String Band* and whatever came around. Joe seemed to appreciate what I was doing. Everything he showed me was very interesting.

Was he instrumental in you going on to produce an more regular band?

He was instrumental in introducing me to Warner Brothers where I got an A&R job in '71, when I recorded *The Stooges*. And you went from producing *The*

Stooges to groups as diverse as *Silverhead* and *Squeeze*.

Silverhead was a little stranger. *Silverhead* was a one-off. *Squeeze* — I worked for Miles Copeland and started *Illegal Records* with him and worked with him for quite a while. There was *Squeeze*, *The Police*, *Sham 69* and another one — I can't remember the name of the other one.

Did you enjoy working with such disparate people?

Well, it was around *Animal Justice*, you know [Cale's 1977 *Illegal* EP] [Copeland] had all these bands and I was very efficient at putting things together. I produced a lot of stuff. I started a little label myself and we all tried to pitch in, make things work. It's in Ian Copeland's book. He's got a biography where he discusses that whole era and pays homage where homage is due to Jane Friedmann who managed me and helped Miles develop the punk scene here.

You were quite involved in the New York punk scene in the mid-70s.

That was after this, yeah. So once I'd moved on from *Illegal*, I went to New York and produced *Patti* [Smith], went on tour with Patti and put my own band together again. And did all night in CBGB's. But what I felt behind here was the [Chris] Spedding band, the leather and the chains and stuff. And when I came back with a band wearing rugby shirts and beards, they handed me my head on a platter.

ENO & SNATCH

"RAF" (Island 7")

[Referring to the spoken voices] Well, they're German news reports. Actual German news reports?

I'm not sure.

That sounds like real. Don't understand what they're saying. If you like your rock political this is the place to be! [A woman's voice comes in] Yeah, I know this.

It's *Eno* with *Snatch*, *John Nylon* and *Patti Palladin*, from 1977.

It needs to be later than that. 1986. But it could be 1977, too, because those synth sounds are fairly old. [At the end of the track there is a chant of "No sacrifice"]. Ah, of course, "No Sacrifice." I know that record. Patti and Judy. It was a little while after I met them that Judy told me about the song "No Sacrifice." It would be '77.

Doesn't Patti sing on your *Fear* album?

No, Judy, on "The Man Who Couldn't Afford To Orgy." Yeah. She was in my band for a while. She and two other girls. It was a strange band. Ian Owendale, Dave O'List. It was fairly funny circumstances because the girls were very raw there up on stage. I wrote "Salome" and "Even Cowgirls Get The Blues" for Judy. They were like the pivotal things in the set. It was '78, even later maybe.

Out of all the people you have collaborated with, *Eno* seems to be the person you've done the most with. In what way?

Well you've worked with him on various projects from the *Ayers/Cale/Nico/Eno* album in 1974 through to *Wrong Way Up* in 1990.

Yeah, there's a very good working relationship, that's true. And he was very easy going. By the time I did *Cambrian Sunset* [1983] it was a case of just setting four tracks aside at the end of the board, then I'd bring the cawar and the champagne. He'd show up at 12 and I'd be back at six. When I got back everything would be finished.

What was the impetus behind *Wrong Way Up*? That was a whole album of collaborations.

Well, *Songs For Drella* happened between *Words For The Dying* and *Wrong Way Up*. [Eno] became the record company; he was very much the record company at that point. And he figured that now was a good time to do a rock record because we could take advantage of it and I agreed with him. But we thought of doing it as a show. I said, 'What's really important is if we can put together a theatre piece around a record. We would have a show that we could put up and travel with, that would occupy maybe two days of a week for about two weeks in a year.' And that's all you'd need to do, put it up and perform it and it would be like a Robert Wilson piece.

The original playing card idea [a playing card appears on the *Wrong Way Up* sleeve] was what ended up as happening. That was the background for it. But he really didn't want to perform. I made it very clear when we were recording the album that I was not interested in doing an album that was going to sit on the shelf, but we would go out and perform it, because I'd been through that with *Drella*, performed it three, four days, and that was it. And if you're going to make a record you've got to commit to it all over New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and London, Berlin, Paris, whatever — the

bare minimum, just go out and perform it would be easy and [Erol] agreed to that. And he's maintained ever since that he's never agreed to it, especially from the minute that he decided not to do anything. I don't know why I believed him, I mean he's always reluctant to perform.

THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN

"Never Understand" from Psychocandy (Blanco Y Negro)
That's not a crowd in there is it? No, it's a noise. It's like high violin harmonics. It's feedback that was apparently sampled and then played back when the track was being recorded. It's *The Jesus And Mary Chain* from ten years ago. Were you aware of them?

Yeah, I've just heard about a band called Liacs which is made up of one of the guys from *The Jesus And Mary Chain* On Hat Records. This is *The Jesus And Mary Chain*.

They were one of countless groups who appeared in the 80s and who made it clear that they were influenced by the... VU.

How do you feel about groups still being influenced by something that you did so many years ago?

It may be there in the music but whether it's there in the mind is something else. I mean there are some very good quotes that I come across in other bands from other countries, useful commodities like the ability to annoy intensely. And that's a very useful thing to have.

Do they mean what they are doing or are they just doing it? Is it a matter of life and death to them that the music sounds like this? Are they doing it because this is what they are, or are they doing this because they think this might work? It doesn't matter because *The Jesus And Mary Chain* have been quite successful.

Do you think that *The Velvet Underground's* position at the time was relatively hard won?

You see I had no second thoughts about it. Once I knew that we'd done stuff like "Venus In Furs", "Heron", "All Tomorrow's Parties", I knew we'd done something that set us apart from everyone else and that it would always be the case. So I just went to sleep at that point and I just thought of more ideas.

When you toured *The Velvet Underground* reunion shows you were supported by Luna, who are probably the

most bare-faced Velvets copyists of all. Was that a deliberate choice? They were on Warner Brothers.

Are you particularly interested in rock music these days, or are you more interested in composition?
No, not composition, what's being done rather than... Hands-on music and where it's all coming from.
Are there any musicians or groups that you particularly like?

Apart from Beck? There's a live band out there in LA. There's a little band I produced called *Moids Of Gravity* who are out there. They have the same sort of attitude, the same psychedelia in their toolbox, use tape delay, use samples, analogue Moogs.

LOU REED "Am-2" from *Metal Machine Music* (RCA)

Sounds like Suicide. The guy from Suicide [Marty Rev] When you listen to a Suicide concert it affects the way you talk. It actually affects the way your voice works because of the beats in the air. It's not Suicide, it's actually *Metal Machine Music*.

Ah yeah. It sounded like radio. It's one way out of a contract.

What did you think of it as a piece of music?

I thought it was a play.
Do you think it has any qualities at all?
The quality to annoy. The quality to annoy intensely.

Reed claimed it was a classical piece, up there with Beethoven and Vivaldi.

He's good at that, though. What a wind-up.

It's been suggested that *Metal Machine Music* was influenced by your own piece "Loop", which was recorded when you were still in the Velvets, so Reed must have heard it in the late 60s.

I think he was influenced by his lawyer, who probably told him, "You're never going to get out of this contract" [laughs] and he immediately took that down and said, "Oh yeah? Watch this!" I think he remembered a few things that he'd picked up along the way in Ludlow Street and thought, "This is my ticket to the big time" [Ludlow Street was the mid-60s New York home of Cale, Reed and Angus MacLise, the original VU drummer and a participant on those early VU/Conrad/Cale sessions].

When you compiled the *Copied/Uncopied* tribute album, you included an excerpt from *Metal Machine Music*.

[Mishearing] What's *Copied/Uncopied*? Copied/Uncopied. The John Cages tribute album that you compiled.

No, it was one of the tracks that was offered by Lou. It wasn't decided by me, it was decided by the art director of the show at the Venice Biennale — that's what it was for. It was an exhibition of Cage's pieces at the Venice Biennale, and the CD to go with it.

Turn it off! Ah, phew! I've been doing this all day. I'm going to go to bed in a minute. I gotta go talk to Patti. Where was I? It was one of the pieces that they chose to be part of it. They asked me to take care of it and I did. I mean I actually taught Joey Ramone to sing "The Wonderful Widow Of 18 Springs", which was really funny. I had to teach Joey note-by-note and bar-by-bar. He was sitting next to me, getting taller by the minute.

BRIAN WILSON & VAN DYKE PARKS

"Lullaby" from *Orange Crate Art* (Warner Brothers)
I'm waiting for The Three Tenors to come in here!

It's the closing instrumental from Brian Wilson and Van Dyke Parks' *Orange Crate Art*.

Ah, Fred Myrow. Van Dyke works with Fred Myrow, a lot who I think did this. This is one of the two tracks that Myrow orchestrated. Have you heard this recording?

I've heard "The New Van Dyke Parks" Rufus Warrington. Do you know that song from Loudon Warrington, "Rufus Is A Tin Man"? Well, Loudon had a boy with Kate McGarrigle. So Kate calls me up one the other day, she says, "I want you to hear my boy, he's down there, he's been signed by Mo Austin and Lenny Waronker to Dreamworks and I want to keep an eye on him, make sure he gets the right treatment, so go down and see what you think." So I went down. I met him and it was uncanny. His songs were... He has a tremendous voice and 20 years old. And you're looking at a young Cole Porter writing acid songs, entirely in the Randy Newman. Van Dyke Parks vein. It was like they never forgot who was there at the old Warner Brothers. Now they have their new Van Dyke Parks.

Was Brian Wilson an influence?
Well, it's the harmony, it's so full-blooded and sweet. Lou and I both loved those songs. And *Pet Sounds* was

a mindblower.

Wilson's singing on this album is really good, although on a TV appearance a few years ago it seemed like his voice was on its way out.

His voice. I don't know how he feels about his voice, because it was something his father had installed in him. Have you seen that movie that Don Was made about him? If you saw that you'd get an idea of the abuse. That song "In My Room" — the background to that was he used to get beaten and he would retreat into his room and write these songs. His father was a real menace. Then you see his mother in the film and think, "Where the hell were you when this was going on?"

I think Brian felt a little strange about it being Van Dyke's album. There's a long history. It goes back to interminable warfare in the band, how many people actually blamed Van Dyke for the collapse of The Beach Boys. They couldn't stand to sing his lyrics. And he writes the most literate lyrics — he's wonderful. This is All-American music, looking at it. The Great Plains, little Broadway.

'American Gothic' is one phrase that's been used to describe Parks.
Well, it's not Gothic. It's too melodic. You know, the Eastman School of Music and learning to sing in the choir with Toscanini conducting, that's all a part of Van Dyke's background. Very eloquent he is about it, too. He regales you with these stories in a stylish way. He's like a southern gentleman.

One last question. I've always been interested in the fact that you often use the name of historical or fictional characters in song titles: "Charlesangue", "Pillson", "Medea Gabler", "Macbeth". Sometimes. Sometimes place names "Crazy Eggs", "Antifuge".

Occasionally the names seem to have a rather peripheral connection to the lyrics.
They have like a hypnotic thing about them when they happen. To me they have connotations that are kind of blinding. It depends on when they happen. I mean there's no rhyme or reason to it, it's like my attempt at hypnotic probably. They have a buzz in my head. I picked that up from trying to practise to be like Dylan Thomas. So that's kind of the background. If you're going to try and be like Dylan Thomas you don't really need to make sense all the time, but the noise will really get you through. A lot of thunder. □



Mute Records



Barry Adamson *Oedipus Schmoedipus*

CD/EP/10" (Mute/134)

Barry Adamson's new album blends traditional jazz, Sly & the Love Generation, soul stirring gospel, big band swagger, classical strings and 1970s thriller themes. Guest vocalists on "Oedipus Schmoedipus" include former Associate Billy McKenzie, Nick Cave and Jarvis Cocker.



Voodoo Child *The End Of Everything*

CD only (CD16417)

As Voodoo Child, dance/rock guru Nubly is able to enjoy the liberty that his better known masquerade doesn't allow. "The End Of Everything" exhibits simple electronic instrumentalists that build into richly melodic soundscapes.



Laibach *Occupied Europe NATO Tour 1994-95*

Video 10" CD box set (MUTE/134)

An individually numbered, limited edition box set commemorating Laibach's last tour and particularly their two triumphant concerts in battle-scarred Sarajevo that took place on the last day of the Bosnian/Serbian conflict and the last day of peace. CD - features full concert.

Video - includes concert footage alongside documentary and promo material.
Released 5th August.

Renegade Soundwave *1987-1995*

CD only (CD16413)

RSW manifest themselves under dual psyches - one operating in instrumental dub psyches - one with more structured dance material. This 29 track double CD compilation (for the price of a single CD) fully illustrates the band's output from their 9 year association with Mute. Like all true innovators Renegade Soundwave have never reaped the fruits of their labours - this is the perfect introduction to RSW.



Einstürzende Neubauten *Ende Neu*

EP/CD/CD + (MUTE/EP/CD/CD)

Long anticipated new album from Europe's leading sound innovationalists. Ever eager for perpetual change, "Ende Neu" sees Neubauten encompass their long held techniques of creating music from everything from their own mental constructions to motors along with traditional instruments and orchestral string sections. Arguably, with tracks like the single "Stello Martin", their most accessible

album to date, but easily as challenging as any previous. Released 19th August. (Limited Edition CD Plus version also available).



Panasonic *Osoto EP*

EP/10" CD (MUTE/134)

This mini album is the follow-up to the Finnish techno minimalists extraordinary "Yoku" album. Where previously the beats and tones were implicit they are now bigger and bolder. Full length new album to follow in late '96.



Forthcoming distractions:-

Simon Fisher Tunnery CD September • Glenn Branca CD September • Phil Niblock CD October
Laibach CD/EP October • Diamanda Galas CD October • Jon Spencer Blues Explosion CD/EP October



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**plus classical, critical
beats and new jazz
releases in brief**

Black Lung The Disinformation Plague

NOVA/TEMBLA NDS02 CD

Silk Saw Come Freely, Co Safely

SUB ROSA SSK01 CD

Firstly, apologies to BL supreme David Thrusell, whose sumptuous solo project I unaccountably rendered as Black Line in my *Soma* piece in *The Wire* 150.

I've penciled tentative lines between the music of *Soma* and that of Tangerine Dream before now, but this excellent CD risks them in with broad-brushed risk: A kind of concept album centred on AIDS and mind control, it's worth wading through the saturnine sleazewords to the music within, which uses the template of textural and timbral profanity and melodic literacy to a more personal and individual end.

The hardcore-meets-Schütze headlong thrash of "Sinister Control Minority" (yep, it's that kind of concept album) and the can-biting infantism which carries "The Elite Controllers" along are offset by Thrusell's customary catholicism in the choice and deployment of samples, ever-ready to create new shapes and dimensions of sound within the landscape of the whole.

The orchestral conception of much of the music is again recipient of the parent group — the amazing counterpointing and relentless construction of textures and rhythms is now assuming awesome proportions. And of course, gloom-junkies can find lots to feast on, not least the reptilian Gothic undertow straining beneath the music of "Beeman Order". Only problem is, why does this album both open and close with what sounds suspiciously like a sequence of Fairlight riffs?

I know what they're thinking: 90s Prog Well, maybe — but hear it first and stick on your labels later.

The problem with albums as good as this is that they tend to dwarf quite acceptable efforts by the likes of Silk Saw. The album already labours under the retarding aegis of shop-bought, clodhopping, over-synthesized rhythms programmed into otherwise interesting conceptions of sound and music. The chromatic calisthenics of "A Dangerous Form Of Drowned Atlantis", with its acoustic reverberated to infinity and its trawl-nets of strings, are joyously inventive, hats off, too, to the panoply of found voices in "Broadcast Trouble", where stray syllables become rhythmic and timbral building-blocks.

Normally, the richness and (dare I say it) grandeur of much of this album would have me purple-prosing it unreservedly. But when you've got thoroughgoing brilliance from the likes of Thrusell changing the rules and moving the goalposts of this music all the time, it means that Silk Saw and other hapless devotees of post-Ambient are going to have to shape up or ship out.

PAUL STUMP

Miles Davis Live Around The World

WARNER BROS/IMP 9362-46032 CD

This is a terrible album. Perhaps Warners released it as final and watertight proof that, despite all the guff spouted by late-80s fusion cognoscenti: Miles simply lost it after 1986. I doubt it, somehow, as much of that delusive balishti is reproduced in the liner notes here.

The other day I dizzied off *Decoy* from 1984, perhaps the peak of Miles's electro-funk makeover, and after listening to this album I wished I hadn't. Miles was never a virtuoso on his instrument and age and ill-health often saw his profile almost submerged by the session heavies he hired, from Corea and McLaughlin, through Scofield and Miller, to Garrett and DeFrancesco. But

what Miles lacked in chops he made up for in brainsprung precision, megawatt power and sheer emotional literacy. When you listened to Miles, the sax, guitar or keys might play more notes (cf Sonny Fortune's or Bob Berg's *Nagaras* of sound) but the man with the horn was the main in charge.

And the man with the horn could play it, sometimes a little crude in his phrasing, a little breathless, but a consummate musician for all that. But listen, if you can hear it, to the cringing mess he makes here of the intro to "Human Nature" from 1988 and see if you can believe it's the same guy on "You're Under Arrest" from just three years earlier, let alone the guy whose trumpet practically rewrites "My Funny Valentine". There is some redemption on the gospel-like lament of "Mr Pastorius", which is delivered haltingly but with poignant grace and timbral sensitivity, and "Amenda" is at least listenable (interestingly, both these last two were taped in the same year, 1989). But for the most part this as-ever awesome outfit (particularly ferocious on "Intruder", "Tutu" and "Human Nature", with Kenny Garrett in no-prisoners form) seem not to be subject to Miles but almost waiting for him to catch up.

Often the music is powerfully wrought and well-held-together — see "Amenda" for details. But as his trumpet-playing vanishes, Miles's fingerprints are fading from the music, and ultimately that charismatic coherence is what makes Miles's music great. Much more of this and they'd have ended up sounding like Soyuzgiz, surely the final insult. Doubtless the fusionheads will have a cow over anyone uttering hereses of this nature, but for the most of this album Miles simply isn't fit to be on stage, so limited is his contribution. And without the lodestone of his hornfalls, the music simply rolls over and dies.

PAUL STUMP

The Black Dog

Music For Adverts (And Short Films)

WAMP PUP 02 CD/2LP

This fine collection of eclectic, Techno-derived sound sculptures could almost be used for adverts — after all, commercial artifice is positively stiff with inferior post-minimalist pastiches whose unshakable tonality and sleek, modern gloss are seen by corporate image makers as the perfect soundtrack to their vapid sales pitches. And Ken Downie, the sole remaining Black Dog, has a born melodist's ear for glittering counterpoint and seductive sound textures. *Music For Adverts (And Short Films)* is crammed with resonant musical motifs — which, with many of the tracks clocking in at under two minutes, are often explored tantalisingly briefly. It's almost as if Downie is daring the advertising agencies to take him on, although that would mean their taking a monumentally blind eye to his clearly ironic intentions.

(*Jell, I sit in my room, imagine the future*) — the lone voice which echoes through the sparse breakbeats of The Black Dog's 1990 debut "Virtual" sounds definitively removed from the white-gloved hardcore hedonism which was starting to dominate British dance music at the time of its release. The Black Dog's music, perhaps because it became heavily entangled in the frustratingly elevated "artificial intelligence" movement of electronic listening music, has maintained an intriguingly skewed relationship to the dancefloor ever since. It's almost as if The Black Dog has been trying to build a knowing, half-contemptuous, half-enraptured bridge between Techno (for want of a better word) and the Ambient/minimalist establishment of Reich and Eno — and on this release, the balance is perfectly struck. *Music For Adverts (And Short Films)* demonstrates both its creator's casual but lavish gift for melody, rhythm and texture, and his reluctance to be tricked into anything too neatly categorised.

The Black Dog's spiky refusal makes itself felt in various ways. For example, the 26 tracks which make up the album are continuously mixed, but with an almost pranksterish disregard for CD's arbitrary divisions — the digitally encoded start point often comes many seconds after the music's actual genesis in the preceding track. And the "organic" inflections which give the record much of its depth (check the plucked Chinese strings in "Meditation (#4)") have neither the crusty glibness of much tribal trance nor the coffee-table sanctimoniousness of Peter Gabriel's *Real World* mob. These assured touches make *Music For Adverts* a work of complex, compromised serenity which will repay repeated exploration.

CHRIS SHARP



PHOTO: PHILIP STEVEN GALT

Disco Inferno

Technicolour

ROUGH TRADE R3412 CD

A leaf through an old music mag, if you've got the time, will maybe give a few pangs of nostalgia but will also highlight how many groups have fallen by the wayside. I'd just got used to Disco Inferno being brave new pioneers and then along comes their "great lost album", *Technicolour*. They split in less than harmonious circumstances in August '95, partly as a result of poor sales. Their previous album, *Di Go Pop*, from 1994 was, title-wise, as ironic as it comes. An intense blast of experimental guitar-pop — the pop with an extremely small "p" — it featured Ian Crause's guitar-MIDI hook-up which tapped into an

immense library of sounds. DI always maintained their status as a guitar group, but here the guitar was triggering smashing glisses, running water, and even crunching footsteps on "Footprints In Snow". As impressive as it was, *Di Go Pop* was a challenging cacophony — both with big 'C's.

It's hard to reconcile Ian Crause's sour pairing shot — "Those songs are just simple pictures, a child's crayon drawing. They have a cartoon quality... it's not real" — with this abandoned (short) album's worth of superb material. Maybe it's because they are hi-tech crayon drawings that they're so good.

The group were making a conscious effort to be more accessible with influences such as The Smiths and REM. Scott Walker and Kraftwerk supposedly worn on their sleeves. Of course they

sound nothing like any of the above. *Technicolour* is a more focused album than its predecessor. The plethora of amazing sounds is used more sparingly and is allied to some quality pop tunes. Electronic could be in the field if they weren't so vapid — and they've actually worked with Kraftwerk's Karl Bartos recently.

The footfalls are still in evidence as metronomic steps on the strange, gorgeous "Don't You Know", with guitars chiming, trumpet fanfares and what sounds like a near subliminal snatch of a child in a playground. Next song, "It's A Kid's World", probably the one Crause disliked so much, has Disney-esque musical box samples over the monstrous souped up backbeat fringed from Iggy Pop's "Lust For Life".

The tide track sums up what they were

doing at this point: a see-sawing rhythm track of rattling chains — or is it a tray of cutlery being dropped? — with a background chant and razor sharp guitars hacking into the body of the song. You could whistle it, too. RIP.

MIKE BARNES

Jad Fair And The Shapir-O'Rama

We Are The Rage

AVANT AVANT 052 CD

We Are The Rage moves further out from Half Japanese's 1995 hot release. On both albums, Jad Fair's muse is unusually sharply focused — in part because his group have a considerable input into the music, while Fair provides the lyrics. In the roll call of rock's eccentrics, Fair is out there with

the most elliptically orbiting satellites, the original Avant Nerd. The important thing is that he doesn't send himself up. Some of *We Are The Rage* is very funny, but then you suspect that it's meant to be.

Wannabe rock eccentrics — Robyn Hitchcock, for instance — sound like they're too keen to get all the 'weird' pieces in their work to fit just so. But like the equally eccentric Jonathan Richman (who once broke down during a TV interview when he started talking about William Blake's poem "The Lamb"), Far is trying to make sense of a world that is stranger than he is.

In the past, Jad Fair's fans have let him get away with just being Jad, the hip mascot. Not here. When the group — with some Japanese guests including Boredoms' Yamamoto — lurch into gear, they are tight with a touch of ragged rawness. The only let-downs are a few rather nebulous splurges of gratuitous cacophony.

It sounds like the work of a deamingly open romantic, sucker-punched by rock 'n' roll imagery in his youth, and an acute observer of the arcane, mundane and absurd things that jag into life's flow. On "I Comb My Hair With My Hand" he swaggers into the picture like a cross — tonally at least — between James Dean and Johnny Weissmuller. "I comb my hair with my hand/into the jungle. I'm your lovin' man" he sings in a cross between a whine and a howl, alternatively screaming in a warped parody of teen hysteria. On "Book Of Love" he takes the boy-meets-girl scenario to psychotic conclusions: "I tattooed her name on my arm of love/Over Mary and under Sandy".

"A lovely banquet hall/To steal a spoon would not be honest/Get plastic ones at a coffee stall, that would be the cheapest," he warns on "Meet Me By The Prison Wall", then proclaims, on "Snella": "You said you were losing sleep and I just woke up for the very first time in my life!" All this is accompanied by a sort of pop approximation of some of Tom Watt's junkyard sonatas and trash rock 'n' roll. Jad or one of his chums nearly always appears to be in the background screaming or shouting down a megaphone. It's part buffeting nose aesthetic, part good old-fashioned enthusiasm.

PIKE BARNES

Flying Saucer Attack Flying Saucer Attack CORPUS HERMETICUS HERPES 017 CD

Windy & Carl Drawing Of Sound ICON RECORDS IC126 CD

Flying Saucer Attack collects recordings of the Bristol noisemakers taken from several live performances in 1994, and splices them pretty much seamlessly together to form a single edifice of noise-guitar improv. This approach to live documentation places FSA firmly in the experimental avant rock field, rejecting the group's more reflective, ethereal leanings for an intense slab of fuzz and guitar squall. Other than the compilation of the various performances to form a whole, post-production appears to have been minimal with a general muddiness prevalent throughout. This leaves the album stranded somewhere between the 'authenticity' of a live bootleg and the artifice of studio-treated performance. If the point has been to accretuate the experimental nature of FSA through careful selection and editing of material, then it's a bit of a shame that the results sound so muffled and boxed-in. There are moments of inspired improvisation here, but too often they become anchored in the muddy, monolithic sound. This lacks the light and shade of FSA's studio recordings, and limits their exploratory qualities to mere noise-mongering.

Hailing from Stanford, Michigan, the oceanic guitar duo Windy & Carl have been described as "a killer Ambient band", and *Drawing Of Sound* goes a long way to suggest that this is not as absurd a statement as it first appears. While at surface level this is a very abstracted, impressionistic sound with long drawn-out bass parts, chiming guitars and partially buried murmured vocals, Windy & Carl also possess a solid sense of rhythm and a dynamic structure which serves to anchor the music. "Lighthouse" and "Whisper", in particular, are driven along as much by this underlying intensity as the airy atmospherics conjured by delicate guitar chimes and the gradual increase in sound layers. The results are infinitely greater than their constituent parts: a shimmering soundworld where melody becomes indistinguishable from texture.

TOM RIDGE

Godflesh Songs Of Love And Hate BARADEI POSH 1517 CDLP

Godflesh may have physically escaped the bleak urban environment of Birmingham by taking up residence in the countryside, but this album demonstrates that their collective psyche still inhabits the city, or at least still bears the scars of protracted city existence. *Songs Of Love And Hate* is a record fuelled by urban paranoia, and evinces the kind of meandropy and nihilism that is engendered by living in close proximity to an overwhelming mass of people. Yet at the heart of it all there is a hint of positivity and affirmation. The little 'yes' as opposed to the big 'no'.

Godflesh may have replaced their drum machine with a human being, but their mechanized, unremittingly brutal sound has not been significantly altered as a result. It remains a common misconception that Godflesh are merely one of a plethora of so-called 'Industrial' chest-beaters who have absorbed a smattering of Nietzsche.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Godflesh are unafraid to expose their fragility, and if one is looking for antecedents, then one could do worse than look to Joy Division. There is the same sense of profound ontological insecurity and Gnostic disgust with the body, but also the desire for transcendence and redemption. The song titles amply illustrate this point: "Frail", "Time, Death And Waste/Lifeless", "Kingdom Come", "Gift Of Heaven". One can't help feeling that although Industrial/Metal fans will find a great deal to enjoy here, they might also be missing the point.

Songs Of Love And Hate is the album Godflesh have been promising to make, but have failed to deliver until now, since their awesome self-titled debut release. The fact that it was self-produced in their own studio, without outside interference from meddling engineers, could well be the reason that the group have produced their best work here, but also one can't help feeling that, in spite of their success, Godflesh have been allowed to flourish unhindered by commercial concerns. Although unafraid to absorb and mutate influences from right across the musical spectrum, Godflesh have created a

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JOHN EVERALL

A Handful Of Dust Now Gods, Stand Up For Bastards

CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 013 CD

Dust/Omit Deformed

CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 014 CD

Various Artists Le Jazz Non: A Compilation Of NZ Noise

CORPUS HERMETICUM HERMES 015 CD

Something's afoot in New Zealand. The sound has a grating presence that blows off postmodern irony and jaded know-it-all encyclopedism like so much chaff. The 'lo-fi' tag is appropriate: this music lacks the studio polish and musically expertise of, say, Japanese noise/emo, where a traditional feel for abstracted materials seems to aestheticise each ugliness, lacquer each splinter. NZ Noise is garage avant-garde: threadbare and spiky, nervous laughter somewhere in the angst.

The prime movers were the Dead C. *A Handful Of Dust* is that group's Bruce Russell in guitar-freeband duets with Alastair Gabriath. They split their notes to find worlds: rainbow spectra, baggage reels, machine-room throbs. Serious yearning is thrown into the measured lengths of their one-note phrases, complex chaons tremble and incohere at the edge of control. When Pete Stapleton adds drums it resembles *The Blue Humans*. "The Book Of Nature Chapter The Second" is excruciated psychedelia, skronk Evan Parker, grunge Steve Reich ("The Dark Lantern Of Reason") interrogates the limits of ear endurance, recording limits, speaker-cone survival. The vibe out on the edge is erotic and materialist. These electric duellists tear the decorative pall from permitted freedoms to drive at the only freedom worth pursuing: the necessity of the never-before-heard. Congruence with the Derek Bailey/Ascension axis is testimony to the objectivity of their sonic extremity rather than any overt sign of "influence." Swooping and vast a monster show.

Dust/Omit is Bruce Russell in tape-

James Chance And The Contortions Molotov Cocktail Lounge

ENITY 157-3 CD

Arto Lindsay O Corpo Sutil (The Subtle Body)

ARKOCCO ACC 10369 CD

Arto Lindsay & The Ambitious Lovers Envy

VIRGIN CDVCD49 CD

Ambitious Lovers Greed

VIRGIN CDVCD545 CD

No one waved goodbye when New York's No Wave came and went at the tail-end of the '70s. No Wave was a kind of formidable quick-response psychic journalism that took a measure of the moment and then took it out in an explosion of snarling guitars, shrieks and saxophones. Of the four cold stars documented on the Eno-produced *No New York* compilation, DNA's Arto Lindsay and Ikuu Mori, and Teenage Jesus's Lydia Lunch came through stronger. Mars went missing in action, but James Chance joined the legions of walking wounded who spend their lives leaning on their one big moment ("Contort Yourself," in James's case) like it was a crutch.

It's a brazen irony because Chance always seemed the most committed to collapsing the temples of punk, jazz and funk in on himself. But like all those who begin by making a virtue out of faking it, he ended up believing his punked-up jazz-schtick and then, quite miraculously, authenticated it with his own increasingly pained autobiography. More than the 26 records that miscast him as a moody pre-space age bachelor pad lounge band leader with seriously bad attitude, he is best heard on an open-veined New York live set featuring extremely harrowing renditions of "Sophisticated Cancer" and James Brown's "King Heron." His latest return to the frontline might have been more heroic, if he weren't contrarily talking up his own musically virtues as well as those of the latest Contortions. Even so, the good news about his first new disc in a decade, recorded live, is it's more hot than warmed-over sick schtick, and Chance blows both tender and vicious on voice and sax. A raggedly endearing rearguard action. Chance? Endearing? I can't believe I said that.

swap overdubs with Clinton Williams. Their *Fisheye 7"* single "Fore-casts" was highly charged, but over the length of an hour the liberal use of echo raises suspicions. Digital echo is spray-on sublime, spurious grandeur, here it suggests an industrial version of the humpback whale songs in *The Howl Who Fell To Earth*. "Calling Master Alboran" is tighter and less in thrall to effect, while "I

Was Already Waiting For You Forever" pits nightmarish office equipment versus guitar that traces the arbitrariness of daydreams: a psychic portrait of everyday class conflict. Like much post-*Blade Runner* soundscaping, "The Malformation Of Lost Territory" relies on true Ambient harmonies to cast a spell on polluted audio verbes: Russell should trust the monumental abstractions he

can project from his amplifier and leave them Xenakis-scale, unengaged.

The *Le Jazz Non* compilation runs from the erased Rock Bottom melodiousness of Rain to the Can-like minimal distorto-bongo of Thela Lane & Sorry feed heavy blues through the lo-fi grinder, Surface Of The Earth stress mans-hum simplicity. *A Handful Of Dust* stick to the sheer heated



Arto Lindsay

As to Arto Lindsay, he remains the most embraceable of the No-Wavers. His excellence derives from how he has always carefully marshalled and maximised limited resources — a likeable, cracked croon of a voice, idiosyncratic understanding of rhythm and scansion — while making sparing use of the exhilarating shatterpunk noise guitar which the more juvenile among his admirers, me included, would dearly love to hear whole albums of (cf *Aggregates 1-26*). So on paper, his latest disc *O Corpo Sutil*, a Brazilian-style song album, sounds like a poorly balanced proposition, especially as Lindsay has ceded all guitar duties to guests Marc Ribot and Bill Fissel. But it turns out to be a real treat. It ought to be as disappointing to Lindsay purists as *Wonderful World* was to fans of Louis Armstrong. But hell, the romantic charm of "4 Sides" and "Nobody In Bed" is undeniable. And the chances are the album will be shamelessly played more often than *Aggregates*. It is a far more unified work than the two under-produced *Ambitious Lovers* releases, where Lindsay's interweaving of tropicana, slick-insect beladry and noiseshock only really cohered into an Arto universe live. But songs like *Envy's* "Cross Your Legs" and "Let's Be Adult" and *Greed's* "Copy Me" and "King" exemplify his bashful, wide-eyed way of conjuring his own awkward lyrical constructs.

BIBA KOPF

provocation of their improvised extravagance, static textures in conflict with the urge to peak. They are evidently the ones to treasure, but the whole scene bursts with vitrol and energy

BEK WATSON

Lamb

Lamb
FONTANA \$32.96/CD

Sneaker Pimps

Becoming X
CLEAN UP CLIP CD/CDDC/CD

Dance music purists (so often the purest of the purists) may already be sharpening their claws to dismiss these records, since their mutual project is to take cutting edge rhythms and make them more accessible by adding female vocals. Such a process is, in some masculinist, modernist eyes, one of watering down and softening up, yet it is the very strategy that in the past has yielded Giorgio Moroder's work with Donna Summer, the cruelly underrated Eclair 101, the Massive Attack/Tracy Thorn and Leftfield/Toni Halliday collaborations, and Portishead's decade-defining *Dummy*, and who in their right minds would sacrifice a C90 made up of those for the latest wilfully manic 12" by some elitist bedroom boffin?

Lamb offer the more rigorous approach, forging their album out of just two elements — Andrew Barlow's electronic percussion, drawing mostly, though not wholly, on drum 'n' bass, and Louise Rhodes's voice stemming from sanger-songwriter sincerity, but with a gritty edge (I imagine, of all things, a stroped Melaine). When the collision between the two is nothing but collision for its own sake, as on the dentist's-drill attack of "Cotton Wool", it's clever, but no more. On tracks like "Goreick" and "Trans Fatty Acid", however, the mesh works evocatively, capturing a sound that is both deeply felt and edgily stark.

Sneaker Pimps are more profligate in their reference points, and consequently their CD the more immediately enjoyable record "Roll On" (which owes much to Little Aye's "Ride On") is rootsy, bolshy and erratic, "Howdy" cradles a folk simplicity in tenderly diatonic repetitions, and "Post-Modern Slezaze" is a delicious swamp blues let down only by shallow lyrics. Unabashed rock n' roll,

sleazy slide guitars and wittily dissonant violins skitter around over a variety of gripping rhythms, and it's also a superbly sequenced collection, each track building on and yet shifting an overall mood saturated in oblique arabesques and mismatched desires.

Both groups have clearly worn out their copies of *Dummy*, though they avoid the Portishead-like trap fallen into by Moloko, and owe almost as much to Björk and PJ Harvey. If borrowing from the best is a defining characteristic of 90s music, then these two records are as representative of where smart British pop ought to be as anything else I've heard this year.

ANDY NEHDURST

Lazer Boy

Forget Nothing
FREEK PARROT CD

The Lazonby Group

War All The Time
SLAM SLAM 214 CD

Lazer Boy are ramshackle indie-pop songs emerge out of lo-fi improvisations which are psychedelic in their canny variety. David Lazonby's cutesy cracked voice is perfect for his sugary, "Infinitely catchy" melodies. Beneath the cup-of-tea-in-the-garden friendliness beats a heart of astute pop appeal. More stringent editing could have produced a more unanswerable debut, but this ethos favours a down-at-the-heel approach: it allows you to admire the multi-coloured socks.

On "Crazy Business" a surly-but-sexy northern babe repeats the title over and over control slips — it's really Lazonby's show. As you might guess from its title, "My Love Is Like A Rainbow Baby" adheres to The Incredible String Bands' beads-and-sitar-in-a-bedist: those who demand a trace of Metal in their pop will not find Lazer Boy replacing The Buzzcocks in their affections. They come from Leeds, have ex-members of Spooked Hybrid and AC Temple in the group, and are quite at home with The Mekons and their 'anti-commercial' sweetness.

According to *Melody Maker*, "If surrealism is possible in music, Lazer Boy have it sorted." If so, it is a particularly sunny, Anglo reflection of surrealism it aims for colloquial whimsy rather than critical shock. As Andre Breton



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Breaking Breath or Driving Original Set
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VIETNAM
Ca Tru, Tradition of the North
HARMONIA MUNDI
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STEFAN WOLPE
David Teller, Al Cohen, Jack Meira, Bob Nagel, Francis Pignatelli, Passacaglia First Recordings 1954
HARMONIA MUNDI CD HMTCD0408



EVAN PARKER & PAUL LYTTON
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Ornette Coleman
Sound Museum: Three Women
 HARPOLOGIC/WERVE 531617 CD

Ornette Coleman
Sound Museum: Hidden Man
 HARPOLOGIC/WERVE 531934 CD

The two parallel CDs of *Sound Museum* constitute, by the standards of Ornette's Prime Time recordings, a straightforward album. That's a relative term of course — as Mingus put it early on, "Trouble is, he can't play it straight." Indeed he can't, which helps to explain why for the best part of 40 years Ornette has played without a pianist. The most striking feature of *Sound Museum* is that he's now hired himself one, in the person of Gen Allen. Not since Paul Bley in the late 50s has he used one in this kind of context — Dave Bryant on last year's engaging, eclectic *Tone During* hardly counts — and it's significant that Allen is one of the few pianists who understands the freedoms Bley pioneered.

It's worth examining the issue further. Ornette once said he wanted to play "the music, not the background", and his improvisations are essentially linear, liberated from harmonic functions which the pianist traditionally supplies. Pianists tend to make bass and drums into a "rhythm section", a concept Ornette rejected. It's true that Prime Time had choral instruments in the form of two guitars, but the saxophonist wasn't interested in interacting harmonically (or maybe at all) with them. It has also been said that as a tempered instrument the piano clashes with horn-players who play many non-tempered tones (as Ornette put it when crossed for playing out of tune, he plays "sharp in tune, flat in tune"). But that's true for many players besides Ornette.

Gen Allen is adept at avoiding the "rhythm section" approach. More negatively, so is Ornette's son Denardo, who sometimes seems to be playing in another room. Bassist Charnett Moffett's exuberant whimsy and Denardo's chattering, stunning drums make for an extreme contrast. I guess the advantage of using Denardo is that there's no need to pay for a drummer. The best that can be said is that, as with his father on trumpet and violin, his playing is a triumph of intensity over technique — and the result is interesting. Somehow, the deficiencies don't seem to matter.

Track listing on the two albums is virtually identical. Ornette writes that the alternative takes demonstrate the hermeneutic approach, but they at least exhibit improvised values. The takes are very different, most obviously, the beautiful dirge-like title track has Ornette on alto and violin on *Three Women*, alto and trumpet on *Hidden Man*. *Time Women* has one rather forgettable vocal track which the other album doesn't. Most of the compositions date from the 70s and 80s, though "European Echoes" was on *At: The Golden Circle* from 1965 (which had Charnett Moffett's father Charles on drums). "What Reason" is a poignant lament, "PP (Piccolo Pesos)" a calypso which Denardo negotiates in his inimitable style. A few years ago, Paul Bley looked back on "the time of the giants", the heroic age of modern jazz, commenting that "today there are only a few people left like that, prowling the globe." Ornette Coleman is one of those giants, still prowling, still apparently on matchless form, capable of producing a monster album like *Sound Museum*. In its mix of pre- and post-Prime Time approaches, it's a unique and essential addition to the Coleman output.

ANDY HAMILTON



PHOTO: NICK PROUTZ

remarked, it is difficult for surrealism to keep its anti-establishment edge in a tradition which venerates Lewis Carroll. Lazorby has already called his jazz album on SLAM! "a bit shit", but musical abstraction helps him escape the honeyed maxims of the Lazer Boy nursery. Powered by Gene Velocette — the late Xero Slingsby's drum titan — *War All The Time* is an oasis among the pointless professionalisation of big-label jazz. The poignant babysound of Lazorby's singing voice transfers well to his alto sax. Against the cool modal chordings of Eddie Roberts's guitar and Simon Russell's posied bass the alto wrangles are fetching. The listening is easy, but not serene.

Both discs evidence a pleasing offbeat attitude and could slot into a variety of lifestyle soundtracks. It would up the stakes if a subversive take 'n' splice

genius like Manchester's Dog Be: were allowed to collage Lazorby's two muses together. Until then, David Lazorby's indie version of Cret Baker's ambidextrousness should be welcomed.

BEN WATSON

The Los Angeles Free Music Society
The Lowest Form Of Music

RARECORDS/CORTICAL FOUNDATION 888 CD 17 10CD

The early 70s were lean years for American music, which was still suffering from the aftershock of Altamont, Manson and the death of the Love Generation. In California the airwaves were spewing forth commercial rock or disco, while punk was only in its infancy on the East Coast, and the Midwest and had yet to make its mark across the nation. Any

avant garde activity around this time was limited, although the first tentative stabs at FM rock's soft white underbelly were being plotted. In San Francisco, The Residents pressed up their debut album *Meet The Residents* on their own Ralph Records label, which had a cover that scuriously defaced Fleet The Beatles in a shameless attempt to gain some underground notoriety. Years later it worked.

Further along, brothers Jax and David Fair would unleash their own, equally outrageous debut EP as Half Japanese, a noise classic that many would blindly ignore, but later pay serious money to own a copy.

In the middle of all this rose the awe-inspiring spectre of The Los Angeles Free Music Society, a happy band of musical oddballs who had grown up on the collected works of The Mothers Of

Invention, Captain Beefheart, Sun Ra and composer Harry Partch (to name a few) and were eager to let their own creative demons loose on the world. This Californian collective were well versed in the room-clearing power of free jazz and improvised music in general, but they were also aware that something new and revolutionary was required if music on a challenging level was to progress and survive.

Listening to this astonishing, lovingly packaged ten-CD set (which contains all the important LAFMS records plus a batch of unreleased material) it is the versatility of the groups concerned that causes the jaw to drop. Pluck any CD from the concertina styled plastic folder that contains them, and prepare to be astonished as Le Forte Four reinvent musique concrete American style and come up with a tribute to "Japanese

Super Heroes" that predates The Boredoms by a couple of decades

Elsewhere The Doo-Doettes (featuring drummer Dennis Duck, who much later would join Steve Wynn's The Dream Syndicate) twist the pop song's neck with devastating results, while Smegma lock on to the greasy Dada teenage outrage element of Freak Out-era Mothers and mutate it still further

As well as producing records, LAFMS held Fluxus-style concerts and happenings, published a magazine called *Light Bub*, and under the direction of poet/improvisor Ace Fadden Ford, released three volumes of a compilation entitled *Blog Easets*, original copies of which are today highly desired because of a rare Residents track on the first volume and for the cover art which was drawn by Ford's hero Captain Beefheart.

All of the LAFMS catalogue was originally available only in limited quantities and mostly by mail order this brave venture is to be applauded and admired. By dragging together the original team of Tom Reeddon, Dennis Duck, Fredrik Nilsen, Kevin Laffey, Jerry Bishop and Rick Puts, compilers Ron Lessard and Gary Todd have returned to the planet a slab of '70s American musical history which was in danger of being trampled underfoot and forgotten. That would have been a tragedy, as everything squeezed into this box is, once heard, an unforgettable experience.

EDWIN FOUNCEY

Chris Meloche

Distant Rituals

SILENT SPRING CD

Waveform

Transmission

VI 0-1-9

SILENT SPRING CD

Higher Intelligence

Agency & Biosphere

Polar Sequences

BEYOND REMIXED? CD

Kim Cascone's Silent label has been exploring a musique concrète/Ambient/Industrial scene since the mid-80s. *Distant Rituals*, by Canadian composer Chris Meloche, is part of a series of six-hour high endurance pieces designed for overnight radiophonic diffusion and broadcast live on CHAW-FM, London,

Canada — a forbidding package from the sandman. The sparse palette of sound textures is built up in layers and remains fairly constant throughout the 71-minute ritual, then, insistent, high-pitched drones, a breather whining, other deep and more rasping continuums. After an eternity, some gong-like reverberations are added, and a faint intermittent tapping. It's a slowly rotating, consistently alien mobile.

Waveform Transmission is no holiday either, though more varied in its materials (if this is Silent's Ambient catalogue, God knows what appears on their industrial imprint). The ten tracks were recorded live and on air "in a small dark room in the basement of WSGR FM, Port Huron, Michigan". The waveforms are weighed towards low-end abrasive hums, rumbles and barely pitched crackles. Rod Model is on "digital audio graphs, and microwave communications", while Chris Troy supervises analogue tone engineering and "recordings of the dead". On "1 2" a faint and periodically distorted beeping surfaces above large cyclic drones, rhythmic rising, then crashes and snatches of Scanners-esque scrambled voices. "1 3" introduces a more Ambient chordal wash, while "1 7" opens out a ghostly world of lo-key electronic noise and gradually crumbling textures.

Neither of these releases explore liminal colour in the vein of, say, *zovietFrance* or Thomas Koner. Hums of white noise absorb the subtler frequencies. But though using minimalist means, the music isn't meditative ether. As with many "Isolationist" productions, the general, cost-free ambience is a cypher for paranoia, evoking sombre subterranean bunkers from *Panama* or *Giger*. As the CD notes for *Waveform Transmission* warn: "Defense Dept-operated oncospheric heaters are affecting all of us. Stop plasma clouds." Where's agency Scully when you need her?

Polar Sequences was also recorded live in more-isolated-than-thou conditions on a mountainside above Gjer Jensen's (aka Biosphere) hometown in Norway. Performing in the Polar Music Festival, Jensen joined forces with Bobby Bird of Birmingham's Higher Intelligence Agency to create sonic material from the local landscape: ice, snow, a mountain lake lift.

It sounds bleak, but *Polar Sequences*

"dark glacial sonics" are positively cheery after Silent's pair of zero degree rages. Both Jensen and Bird have been part of the Ambient club scene, and most of these tracks combine insistent rhythmic textures with musique concrète.

"Criminarian Shift" conjures booming rumbles, percussive drunks, faint sirens and sweeping noise. "White Lightning" disorientates with sirens, crashes, thuds and muffled beats, suggesting dimensions which as it swiftly gutted and collapsed. Other tracks sample strands of arsy conversation, or the sound of trickling meliowater.

It's a sense of dynamics that help to move the performance through the gothic gloom of a polar winter, and with "Countdown To Darkness" they construct a masterpiece out of well-timed undulations. Jungly trills, oscillators and pulses, from glacial-bass to insect-hysteria. Mismensing, if you can give it time.

MATT FYFFCHE

David Murray Octet

Dark Star (The Music Of The Grateful Dead)

ASTOR PLACE RECORDS CD

Joe Gallant & Illuminati

The Blues For Allah Project

KNITTING FACTORY WORKS KFW188 CD

Back in the 80s, it looked as if David Murray might relaunch jazz as a happening artform. However, Wynton Marsalis's conservative pop swept the board, and Murray became an itinerant tenor player. Since then, the variety and quantity of his releases has been bewildering: ballad albums, big-band orchestras, noisier harmonica with Blood Ullmer, Hammond-organ groovers, free jazz on DIW Live, he remains the most stirring full-pelt improviser on the planet, but as regards marketing and image he has been left out in the cold.

In 1993 he guested with The Grateful Dead at Madison Square Garden. Deprived of the ongoing, 60s-timewarp festival-circus they gave America, it's been hard for us in England to credit The Dead's commitment to innovative music. The show-up-and-play country rock of their best-known albums gave little inkling of their interest in Sun Ra and the New Complexity. However, The Dead's live ethic did save them from the



Terry Riley

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Einstürzende Neubauten

Ende Neu

NUFF (SIC) 504 CD

To reach Luigi Russolo's early-teens tracts and discussions of Futurist music and machine-noise is to discover an aesthetic world that no official art or music history has yet led us to expect. Unlike his loudhearted, showboating, sometime-colleague (and fastest-to-be) Marinetti, Russolo was really a listener, hypnotized by the sensuality (the purr, as he put it) of the revealed tones of engines revving. He had to work loud because microphones were in their infancy before the '20s, but what he heard was often not loud, and actually often masked by volume. The bangs and the cracks and the roars brought the Italian experimenter massive attention — took an idea of a new music round the world — but in time they also burned him, glued him undesirably into a notion of facts past and knitted concepts landlocked by their own tiny single-mindedness.

Going back to the early '80s to note exactly when Einstürzende Neubauten began making a thing of singing quiet, and of using tunes, one rediscovers something perhaps a little surprising. They never didn't sing quiet; they never didn't use tunes. Of course there was always huge brain-damage noise, bandsaws singing, sparks flying: industrial road-tools did punch the structures of the ICA, and many other places, beside — and compared with much that surrounded it at the time, this all seemed hilarious and magnificent and liberating. And now some of it seems a little intellectually restricted, or at least it would, if this was all they'd pursued.

But the deep soul of the Berlin group who hymned the West's — or was it the East's? — collapse was never at all so joltingly one-note. The best evidence of that has always been this: that since *Häber Mensch* at least, it has been very hard to make satisfactory cassette tapes of EN-music. The highs and the lows are way too far apart in level, and way too close in time: their volume makes leaps, from extremely loud to extremely quiet and back, leaving much domestic sound-repro equipment beggared and spluttering.) Two years ago, the glorious *Tobias Rosa* showcased a group reaching a degree of control of its best extremes. Interviewing not only severe close-miked percussive delicacy and pellucid high-racket clatter and drone, but also the two wings of singer-writer Blixa Bargeld's sensibilities, demonically energized glee and lovesick melancholy lyricism.

Putting it thus, *Ende Neu* may test some across as more of the same, a virtuosic display of contrasts and explorations (instrumentation includes strings, choirs, air-compressor, stream-compressor, engines from Renault, Alfa Romeo, Cioce 2004 caterpillar and Magnus Deutz earth-mover, and — my favourite — close-miked pencil and paper), but nonetheless one which occupies the same gorgeous



EN's Blixa Bargeld

(stare as *Tobias Rosa*)

But a subtle clue to more profound changes can be found in an unexpected place: though the group line-up is more or less the one it's had the last 16 years (Mark Chung has left, one key member — of a crew who long revelled in excellent stage-names — has reverted *NUff* to his *Mr. Unruh* is *Mr. Unruh* no longer, but now plain Andrew Chudy. Ten years ago, the idea of a lightened-up, serene, mature Neubauten would quite properly have depressed and alarmed their followers. Responsibility was EN's business, the deranged antics of noise their stick. Always before they had fun with the idea of themselves, but it was nonetheless a brittle, dread-

filled fun, with dark Biblical-cosmic shadows overhanging. Now at last they also seem able to enjoy the notions others have had of them, good and bad, and to play with them as well. (The best example being "The Garden", words based on something Blixa overheard a little old Englishwoman saying to her friend: "You will find me in the garden. Unless it's pouring down with rain" — but most of the other songs have a subtle self-mocking overdrawn undertone to them, so that though attention to sound-matters is as heightened as ever, it's also somehow framed in a new way, with — that ancient leisure-industry chestnut — something here for everyone.)

Ever since Russolo's Futurist project ground to a halt in the late '20s, alleged successors have been being found and proclaimed: from Cage and Schaeffer to Kraftwerk, from punk and industrial proto-Techton to Jungle. Always there've been strong reasons for such claims: always there've been ideological elisions. Neubauten's pursuit of this same ur-modernism is as revisionary as anyone's so far, as skewed and as partial, how could it not be? But it's also clear by now that their (re)reading has been as strong as anyone's, and as original. Surprisingly few music-lovers know how to listen: these have been some of them.

MARK SINKER

insular AOR sterility of colleagues Jefferson Airplane: they could welcome aboard a dyed-in-the-wool gospeli/jazz voice-from-the-roots like Murray.

Here Murray repays his debt. No facile cash in, it cannot evade the fact that the music industry has closed down instrumental heroism as a mass-market phenomenon. It feels like Murray has to be a spectator at his own show. The opener, "Shakedown Street", is in many ways the worst thing about it — Robert Irving III's keyboards putting down a crass A/R reminiscent of Lester Bowie's plodding *Black Fantasy*. The recording is ariest, compressed and homogenised. However, later on there's some great trombone from Craig Harris, and on

"One More Saturday Night" Murray sprays into an ever-widening blow-out that catches the breath. "Dark Star" is revealed as a cunning cod jazz melody worthy of Wazoo-era Zapka.

Horn melodics and noise smash the jazz-rock divide by proposing something new. Dark Star recalls some quiet '60s project like Count Basie's *Beatles Bag* or Joe Ross plays *The Stones*. Murray's profound understanding of Blanton's legacy keeps the music solid, while the gobsmack testifying of the solos might make some consumer choke on their case-burger.

Joe Galliani's album comes in a be-die daylio sleeve. A Knitting Factory 16-piece group play arrangements of tunes

from one of The Dead's afrosadist snu-up-and-play albums, *Blues For Allah*. Since "Dark Star" appears to be the only Dead tune with a modicum of musical interest, the results are meagre. The group capture The Dead's Frisco-hot-fest good-time New Orleansy jangle, oddly reminiscent of John Mayall's *Bluesbreakers* of dreadful memory. However, that only serves to remind us what was so crap about The Dead in the first place. Fleetwood Mac honky 'blues' that fattened itself as 'alternative', the sound of the privileged thinking they can cop those 'street' grooves without paying any dues or contributing a new edge. The 'out' improv is twiddle time-wasters, as pretentious as they are patronising.

about as convincing and soulful as the white kid with the frizz hair who says "mart" and wears flares in the '70s movie David Murray's tribute may be flawed, but it isn't this ghastly garbage.

REN WATSON

William Parker

Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy
HOMESTEAD RECORDS HPS231 CD

Joe Morris Ensemble

Elsewhere
HOMESTEAD RECORDS HPS233 CD

Heaving into sight from the Homestead direction come two juggernauts of 1990s American free music: the

exemplary grit and invention of both Parker and Morris is enough to make most of what goes on at the 'vital' fringes of jazz seem palid indeed.

Parker's *Composson Seizes Bed-Stuy* is the final part of a trilogy which began with a sextet album and continued with *Testimony* for solo bass. Among the dedicatees are Paul Robeson, Malcolm X and Julius Hemphill. A couple of the pieces, Parker comments drily in his sleeve-note, "may have political overtones." In keeping with the mood of invocation, pianist Cooper Moore develops his parts with slow, sonorous chords. The gap between Parker's restless, swerving energy and Moore's ambiguous, differently-paced contribution gives the album much of its distinctive tone. Add to this the straining power of Rob Brown's alto, which works with a pointed, blazing economy, and Susy Barral's discreet drumming, and the scene is set for the epic which unfolds. At the heart of the action, however, is Parker's own playing (though his production hardly places him at the front of the mix). His brilliant unpredictability lays down a shifting web of sound

beneath the other contributions that seems to animate the whole.

The Joe Morris album has him in the company of Parker again, Matthew Shipp and Whit Dickey, a line-up which promises much and delivers regally. Morris is one of a few musicians capable of redefining the possibilities of their instrument. He doesn't wear the breadth of his listening on his sleeve, it's thoroughly absorbed into a deeply personal and fluid playing style. No messing with quotations, it sounds like full-blooded Morris from note one. He's forever embarking on marathon runs that combine a dancing lightness of touch with braiding melodic invention. The mazy scribble of his style has a mysterious internal consistency which is both deeply satisfying and demanding. Shipp makes a fascinating partner in the challenging environment, able to pick up on the detail of Morris's ideas and build and convert them into something ravishing of his own. Parker is again overwhelming. Of the six pieces on the album the slow-moving "Violet" is perhaps the most impressive, a strange and lovely melody which recalls the other-mindedness of Ornette

Coleman's writing. And when the group get hectic, they make a mighty sound. Great free music.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Barre Phillips/ Yoshizawa Motoharu Uzu

PIR 75 CD

Barre Phillips/Ketji Haino

Etchings In The Air
PIR 74 CD

Barre Phillips, the bass player who's played with everyone from Jimmy Guffey to Archie Shepp, in two improvised duets. Motoharu plays "homemade electric vertical five strings bass". The bassists mesh their sounds, scrolling forth lush, suggestive, paterly abstractions. Panels open onto ganglike truds, classical rhapsody, lo-fi textures. Repetition is quick-minded and controlled, upsetting prediction at every instant. Effects are brushed in with a morphic originality that bodes and intrigues. Using a stunning panoply of musical reference,

these canny oldsters improvise a surreal collage. The twinkle and detail here makes most of the competition look crude and dull. Unlike establishment composers, improvisers seem to achieve greater intensity as they age.

Ketji Haino's vocal cries are signs of strenuous effort, recalling the exhalations of martial arts practitioners. Like Yoko Ono's "primal" screaming in the 60s, regression to body-nose is evidently meant to break through the skin of mere art. Rhythmically sharper than Ono's little-rich-girl blessings, Haino evinces no better sense of structure. Philips can do no more than reply in kind: a random heap of melodramatic gestures. Stark presentation of these meagre materials evokes the barren space of the arts venue — an audience spellbound by notions of faked genius. The ghost of Antonin Artaud, the tiresome performance fraud expelled by the surrealists, stalks the new capital of the global economy.

On the last track Phillips plays a sturdy riff, each note ringing with his trademark light-metal tone. It creates the only worthwhile music on the disc. The title,

Spring Heel Jack

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"Key Finder", raises the suspicion that Hano is as much in awe of regular musically as anyone else, but expects us to give his every lost stagger and historic outburst the benefit of the doubt. Here's one listener who doesn't.

BEN WATSON

James Plotkin/Mick Harris Collapse

SOMETIME/USPHEAL 0963 CD

Scorn Loggia Barogghi

BARACHE/NOISE 1158 CD

OLD boy James Plotkin and Scorn supreme Mick Harris have hit on a creative marriage that is made in heaven, but stoked by the fires of hell. Collapse consists of five long instrumentals which have been put together "through use of looped guitar, natural and unnatural sound", but what grows low from the belly of their beast is something much more exciting and threatening to the senses than those simple sound props suggest.

Plotkin has already acknowledged the influence of such early Industrial Krautrockers as Cluster in his work and to some extent the electronic space drone present on that group's first two albums can also be detected here. The bulk of Collapse, however, owes more to an earlier incarnation called Kluster, who were far more abstract and abrasive in their approach. Plotkin and Harris are also discovering new ways to play guitar and gladly allow power chord technique to be overthrown by technology so that the instrument loses form and melts into the general organised chaos of the music. Here that raw edge of brutal experimentation is sharpened considerably and the result is a record which cuts deep into the subconscious and draws blood.

Harris's Scorn project is much earthier sounding, and when stacked next to the dark Ambient swirl of Collapse seems almost crude by comparison. Shunted along by a series of sampled steel-foundry drum beats, with a mass of electronic tendrils and guttural vocals swarming and screaming directly beneath, songs such as "Do The Geek", "Sponge" and the fabulously titled "Ptherring Twat" lurch forward with a club-footed grace that is almost

beautiful in its awkwardness. On Loggia Barogghi Harris has cultivated the sampling virus into an epidemic.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Psychic TV Trip Set

CLEOPATRA CLEOPATRA CD

"I'm stong here with you/Just wondering exactly what to do/That's quite usual for me/I guess that's what you always see" ("Suspicion") a useful summary of the discourse positioning of Trip Set. Too lazy or stoned (probably both) to make anything special out of his musical materials (no tune rises above a three-note Gregorian drone), Genesis P-Orridge assures us that, inside his own head, it's really sublime. Drug and sex references abound, but Genesis is unable to imagine a listener enough to achieve any 'genuine' urgency. The would-be arrogance of his solipsism is flawed by a gutsy conscience about inertia. It is like being locked in a room with a social inadequate chain-lighting joss-sticks and recounting an acid trip. Hell.

The tune of "Suspicion" is lifted from The Velvet Underground, and it makes a telling contrast to, say, The Only Ones. Peter Perrett's use of that legacy. Crafting his sardony into feed-speak allowed Perrett to kick up collective rage while retaining detachment, a savage and sophisticated dispute between society and self. Psychic TV evince no such wit, just pastel echoes of the 'great music' they'd had wash over them.

There are some tentative Indian vocals. Ambient tape-loops, twanging Afrikanish guitars. If music scores you, there are plenty of sonic distractions. Psychic TV so desperately want to be weird, but only those whose musical experience comprises The Beatles, Dylan and Leonard Cohen could find it off-the-wall. You could interpret Psychic TV's hermetic stupidity as postmodern irony. I call it happy bollocks.

BEN WATSON

Red Snapper Prince Blüney

WARP/WARPPS CDLP

obO Fut!

TUSH TUSH CD

Two of the more interesting projects from the Electronics-jazz melting pot.

Both Red Snapper and obO (which is the branchild of former Snapper collaborator Allan Ridding) use soy-movie-jazzness (double bass, slurring horns, improvisational songwriting tactics) to achieve an understated, suave machismo. But where Red Snapper plays *The Saint* in a gritty chase scene scored by Roland Kirk, Dick Dale and King Tubby, obO's *Fut!* is the sound of James Bond, Martin in the land, undressing Pussy Galore with his eyes.

Prince Blüney is a more assured and polished album than last year's *Asses And Stained*. An individual sound is beginning to emerge out of the jumbled muck of their influences (40s gangster flicks, Charles Mingus, Jefffield Techno, Sandy Nelson, Rare Groove and The Charistays' guitar reverb), and on tracks like "The Last One" and "Digging Doctor What What" their antiquarianism works with current production techniques to create something vaguely futuristic. Red Snapper seem to come from the tradition of rock instrumentalists rather than doped-out minimalists, which means that even their dub gestures are textured by honking, stry-pint sax, twanging tremolo and a Billy Stewart sample.

With flutes, sultry "Smooth Operator" sax and keyboard sounds that wouldn't be out of place on a Ch-Utes record, obO is not so much chill-out as lover's rock — Electronics as quiet storm. "Piked" is the soundtrack to the love scene from *Truck Turner* as rendered by Isaac Hayes and Klaus Schulze, while "Forehead" is what a Dr Dre record might sound like if he actually liked the women he slept with. While *Fut!* has its moments, its post-coital mumblings begin to sound too much like the relentless pleadings of some glazed, louché drunkard desperately trying to chat you up. By defying the backing tracks to every record The Stylites made, and coating the end-product with sugary synth washes, obO take the lust, emotion and sex out of soft soul and leave only the sleaze.

PETER SHAPIRO

Max Roach With The New Orchestra Of Boston And The So What Brass Quintet

BLUE NOTE (CD 7243 83481 323 CD)

Max Roach is no doubt tired of being relegated to the 1940s, but it's still

surprising the sleeve note here omits his role as Charlie Parker's drummer. The M'Boom Percussion Ensemble, theatre and orchestra projects, dance, duets with opera singer Jessie Norman, even an appearance with the Kodo Drummers of Japan, all are considered more important than crafting the rhythmic matrix for the first salvo of black bohemia, bebop. The omission may signal dismay at the retro jazz being peddled by Wynton Marsalis at the Lincoln Center, or maybe simply establishment ambitions: here Roach is featured soloist in a 50-minute orchestral composition by Fred Tilles, Professor of Music at Amherst University.

Unfortunately, Tilles is a mediocre and dated composer. "Festival Journey", with its starchy brass fanfares, thinly emotive strings and sub-liturgical pastoral, recalls nothing so much as 40s film music. Polyphonic modal interludes provide occasions for Roach. Third Stream showed that the classical/jazz interface could be more than academic romanticism plus a drum solo, but, despite the professorship, there are no signs Tilles has listened to Edgard Varese, Gunther Schuller or Hall Overton.

The postscript is a 12-minute "Ghost Dance" by Roach's jazz sextet. He is a brusque, effective leader and there's a great drum exchange with trombonist Steve Turre. Crystalline horn convolutions are folded into infectious swing. The original was on *To The Max*, a brilliant double CD he recorded for Enja in 1992. That proved Roach was a lot more than Parker's sidekick, this parade of classical pretension is as dead as the dodo.

BEN WATSON

Paul Schütze Abyssmal Evenings

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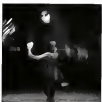
Paul Schütze & Andrew Hulme Fell

74 960115 CD

Xenakis described his 1962 electroacoustic piece "Bohór" 1" as music that is "monistic with internal plurality". Paul Schütze would probably tread the lofty phraseology with amused disdain, but he has been equally absorbed by that essential idea: music in which nothing much happens, but there



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Arvo Pärt

Litany

ECM NEW SERIES 1592 CD

There should, by now, be no problems in identifying Arvo Pärt's music. The Estonian composer's characteristic signatures — that is, an acutely attentive approach to harmony within a structure which appropriates both religious and minimal elements — have now been set out for many years. If this could be described as Pärt's particular language, his grammar, it might be said that his work is now concerned with exposition. Analogies in the past have dwelt on Pärt's links with the minimalists, but it might be time to drag the frame of reference further back — certainly to JS Bach and his own magnificent formalism.

Weighing in at just under 40 minutes, *Litany* (accompanied by two other world premiere recordings of *Psalm* and *Trisagion*) may be a shortish disc, but the sheer concentration and understated complexity of the compositions dictates otherwise. Like much of his work, this is religious music. For soloists, choir and orchestra, *Litany*'s text comes from 24 hourly prayers from the Russian Orthodox church, while the two remaining pieces — both instrumentals — have similar liturgical origins. *Psalm* and *Trisagion* (here played by The Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra under conductor Saulius Sondeckis) are fine, deeply explorative works, but it is *Litany* that really reaches outwards. Starting from a violin motif, with four male voices (led by countertenor David James) taking up the prayer, Pärt achieves his familiar sound of pendulous luminosity early on. There are elements, similar to those heard on ECM's early Pärt records, *Arbos* or *Tabula Rasa*, which pull the sonics right down to the basses, through abruptly jarring dissonances, to, finally, a harmonic resolution. These are, in architectural and emotional terms, excruciating and rewarding. Listening to Pärt always brings into question issues of tension and relief. His framing is always exquisite, but how far Pärt reaches beyond these confines is a subject worthy of debate.

LOUISE GRAY

is always a lot to hear. In place of melodic progression, Schütze's music (not that there is a veritable slow appearing this year) substitutes a kind of rarefied digital alchemy — indeed, few musicians have been as determined to fully respond to the challenge of limitless tone colour set by the advent of highly manipulable digital sound synthesis.

His soundworlds evoke cold, shimmering insect ecosystems, perpetually shifting and vibrating, they seem generated not by anything so simple as a compositional system but rather by an intuitive, nebulous, collective intelligence. Repeatedly, what initially seems like a simple keyboard drone is nurturingly treated until it breeds glittering, modulating harmonics which permeate the hushed bursts of muted percussion that provide the rhythmic logic. This painstaking approach to ineffably subtle digital blending is mirrored in Schütze's use of language — evocative titles like "The Lotus Voltage" on *Atypical Evenings* or "Rain Of Rust" on *Fell* show the same concern for

fleeting nuance and textural collage as the music does.

Of the two recordings here, *Atypical Evenings* is the more "accessible" — the muted, gamelan-inflected metallic chimes which make up much of the percussion are reverberated into waxy stratospheric layers, while Robert Hampson's treated guitars and Ben Neill's mutantrumpet supply unresolved mists of ambient colour. By contrast, *Fell* is streaked with unruly eruptions of clattering, Harry Panthe's rhythmic, and marked by disconcertingly abrupt tonal shifts and stident stereo manipulations. Throughout, non-specific "ethnic" vocal samples evoke Holger Czukay and Ralf Dammann's *Canons*, but — crucially — Schütze and collaborator Andrew Hulme (of *O Yoko Conjugate*) substitute for the stately Baroque chord progressions of that Ambient landmark a chameleon soundworld in which the voices float lost, disembodied and rootless. It's a case study in uneasy listening: sonically intriguing and absolutely convincing.

CHRIS SHARP

DJ Shadow

Endtroducing... DJ Shadow

HD WAXMAN/HW59 CD/2P

Shadow, the Californian darling of the British Mo'Wax label, has delivered a debut album of melancholic moodiness. Shadow's early tracks such as 1993's "InFlux" and "Entropy" helped usher in a new style of vocal-free breakbeat music, but three years down the line he's been left in the dark by a newer breed of breakbeat scientists such as the artists populating the Ninja Tune and Wall Of Sound camps. How often is it that pioneers get overtaken in the rush to make use of their ideas? On *Endtroducing*, Shadow's reworking of Hip-hop strips the music of its dynamism and substitutes a lukewarm, time-silvion. Song titles like "Midnight In A Perfect World", "Building Steam With A Grain Of Salt" and "The Number Song" invoke a timeless remoteness of Sixth Form poetry.

His bulky Hip-hop beats lope like dinosaurs and everything on top, the

melodies, the samples, just drag you down. Tellingly, the best track remains his two year old classic "What Does Your Soul Look Like?", presented here twice in new forms. It's a track that proves that Shadow can be capable of producing great music, as did his production of Blackalicious's lost killer of a record *Melokio*, which promised a great future for the DJ. Left to his own devices, Shadow appears to have retreated into a shell of lepid introspection. Track ten is entitled "Why Hip Hop Sucks In 96" (irony, apparently). It's not the hip-hop that sucks.

JAKE BARNES

Markus & Simon

Stachhausen

Cologne Music Fantasy

LARGE 5133 CD

A lot of recording goes on that is never intended for release. There are demonstration tapes, theatre tapes, dance tapes and recordings made for private study, personal satisfaction or

archive purposes. And there are library music CDs — albums that are not really albums but designed to be flicked through by overworked media producers in search of backgrounds for their latest windsurfing documentary or cinema advert (don't knock it — plenty of good musicians keep their families shod and fed with library discs).

If, like me, you are an admirer of the hugely talented trumpeter Markus Stockhausen, then buy another CD, such as his impressive *Possible Worlds*. Cologne Music Fantasy is not an album album, though it is clearly the work of three competent and imaginative musicians: Markus, brother Simon (keyboards and soprano sax) and drummer Jo Thones. 13 tracks are taken up with a commission for an open-air laser and fireworks event to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Cologne Philharmonic Hall. Everything was recorded clean and dry, with synths and electronic percussion going direct to the mixing desk by the sound of it, and of course this would have sounded impressive when blasted loud through a big speaker system in the Rhine Garden of Cologne's old quarter. Had you been there, you might have wished to buy this CD as a souvenir, but the disc's production makes no attempt to recreate, in sonic terms, the grandeur of a big, extravagant show. There are some moments where their innate musicality bursts through the straitjacket of the format, such as "Glodden's" opening canon and he became jazz rock table-tennis of "Ping Pong" (anticipating Jon Rose's interactive badminton by a few years).

The shortcomings are the common ones of A&R and arrangement (a shorter, punchier suite would have worked better), composition (which lacks flair, perhaps done too hurriedly) and timbre. Simon's bass-light synthesizer sounds, which fill all the sound space around the trumpet, sax and drums, are disappointing and sound like... well, they sound like something from a library album.

JOHN L. WALTERS

Lewis Taylor

ISLAND CD0049 CDLP

Ever since Marvin Gaye took control of his music (and to a much lesser degree) his life, the test of a real soul man's

mettle has not merely been his ability to transmit the sentiments of the devil through the voice of an angel, he must also be a songwriting, multi-instrumentalist, mood-desk wizard. In the last year, two notable figures have risen to meet this challenge: D'Angelo and Maxwell. Now, forming the third part of this nouveau soul trinity, comes Brian's great white hope, Lewis Taylor.

Comparisons are inevitable but largely invalid. The music on Taylor's debut album has little in common with the digital sheen of D'Angelo's *Brown Sugar* or the lush narcissism of Maxwell's *Urban Hang Suite*. It's an altogether earthier, more downbeat affair, that at times has more in common with Scott Walker or Tim Buckley than the usual reference points. Structurally complex and emotionally ambiguous, it's a record that eschews smooth contours for jagged edges, syncing sound to sentiment and sidestepping soul music's greatest paradox: the contrast between its vocal anguish and musical buoyancy. Building the most impressive tracks around stunted beats, doleful piano and plaintive wah-wah-style guitar, Taylor's beautifully fractured voice wanders freely and the metaculously constructed, angular landscapes, without ever appearing to be at odds with them.

His rare reversions to sprightly yet superficial type, while highlighting his skill as a songwriter, are less successful. Yet in his explorations of its bleaker hinterlands, Taylor looks at soul music in the same way as Tricky regards HipHop through a glass darkly.

PETER MCINTYRE

Teenagers In Trouble

Teenagers In Trouble Vs Fat Paul

SWAP FINEST STREET CDLP

Bristol experimentalists Teenagers In Trouble come across like irreverent indie/TripHop siblings given the keys to big brother's bedroom studio for the first time: you can see it all ending in tears at any moment. There's a strong trash-aesthetic being pushed — witness song titles like "How Come You Don't Shit On Me No More" and "Don't Make Me Wash" — suggestive of an archness going for the burn. Sometimes the rory is just too heavy-handed, "Coming Into Los Angeles" is one Jim Morrison pastiche too far (the bloated

fatuosity of the original *An American Prayer* is really so far gone as to parody itself). The sample-crazy "At The Hiss", however, grooves along mightily, as does the baroque-basement hymn of "I Wanna Get Higher".

Inevitably, the grooves wear far better than the jokes, even if they owe much to the likes of Beck and The Beazbe Boys, with the odd drum 'n' bass breakbeat thrown in for good measure. There's an awkward five minutes of excruciating punk-thrash to be endured with "Gong Up The Country" which ends, curiously, with a public service, anti-drug announcement from Grand Funk Railroad, and another blindingly obvious piss-take — this time of Lennon with "I Had A Dream", which is mercifully brief. All this is crammed into 30 minutes of running time and is suggestive of talent to spare, requiring perhaps just a touch of editorial input to weed out the parts that are surplus to requirement or just plain tedious.

TOP RAGE

A Tribe Called Quest

Beats, Rhymes And Life

JIVE HIP TO COMECLIP

A Tribe Called Quest may have originally garnered their reputation by playing second fiddle to De La Soul and The Jungle Brothers in the Native Tongues alliance, but Quest have now outstripped both in terms of artistic and commercial success. Quest simplified De La Soul's oblique logic and hardened The JBs' jazziness to produce HipHop that was both abstract and pop savvy. Their narratives were deliciously surreal, their metaphors mined the depths of tangential word play without sacrificing clarity and their brotherhood jams, such as "Scenario", were infectious despite your misgivings.

I use the past tense because rapper Phife has now moved to Atlanta from New York and only Carmo has ever survived that journey with his brains intact. Perhaps as a result of this move to America's home of slight urban contemporary pop, *Beats, Rhymes And Life* is glossy, hi-contrast HipHop that aspires to the quality of R&B. Typically, the music is lazy and sleepy, but the blear is good. The lazy film of old has been replaced by a mix which features impossibly crisp beats and razor sharp snares. Their exploit R&B moves are

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soundcheck

wretched on "Stressed Out" Faith Evans over-romances the shoddy chorus ("I really know how it feels to be stressed out, stressed out/When you're face to face with your adversary") with enough out-of-place stylizations to make Whitney Houston blush.

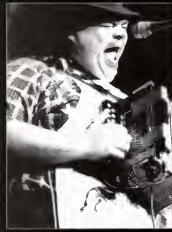
Q-Tip's flow is still impeccable, however, and Phife's talent for juxtaposition remains unfettered: "Watch me stab up the track as if my name was *CJ Simpson*! pokes it in like Van Halen! work for mine, you, you're freeboadin' like Kato Kaelin!" The vibes and Fender Rhodes are still prevalent, the references (Megadeth, Greg The Hammer, Valentine, Pocahontas, Santana, the New York Knicks, Shirley Chisholm, Kool & The Gang, Sgt. Slaughter) are as eclectic as ever, but the delight, energy and bizarre sense of humour are gone.

PETER SHAPIRO

Simon Fisher Turner *Shwama*

MUSIC STORE 151 CD

Ex-driver for Adam And The Ants, starring in *Black Beauty* and Michael Winner's *The Big Sleep*, playing bass and guitar with The Tea, recording soundtracks for Derek Jarman's *The Lost Of England* and Blue Simon Fisher Turner's CV reads like a random cut-up of 80s culture. *Shwama* is an equally improbable blend of found sounds recorded from "Antigua to Tokyo, Jerusalem to Bangkok," the pain cries of Incantation's Sergio Avila, poetry from Queren Stevenson and Napa Hadon, vocals from Marilyn Bates (Eyeless In Gaza) and Jocelyn West (Miranda Sex Garden), and ex-Wire member Bruce Gebert's nose sculptures. It has all the makings of a Wim Wenders-style concept album about trans-urban bewilderment, but manages to remain insistent through sheer sonic weirdness. *Shwama* opens with clanging bells and the sampled hum of public spaces, but quickly adds more incongruous layers of sound and content: distorted guitar mingled with radio hiss, a warm electric organ and thudding bass and clear female vocals, before sloping away into free sax warbles and global flut. The hallucinatory "GongEcho" sounds like a procession of Zen monks entering the body of a radio receiver before a closing ceremony inside a radiator.



ERIC L. JOHNSON

David Thomas & Two Pale Boys *Erehwon*

CODEMAN VINYL, COOK CD 105 CD

Pere Ubu *Delatank: In The Year Zero*

GEFFEN/COOK VINYL, COOK CD 098 CD

David Thomas is always going to be remembered for the flash that ignited Pere Ubu in mid-70s Cleveland. And last year Ubu returned to top form with the restless, probing *Raygun Saloon*. Two Pale Boys is Thomas's latest side project, and 20-odd years on from that flash he's made one of the most inventive records of his career.

Thomas has always been both intense and capricious, and here both those characteristics clash head on. *Erehwon* is red-blooded, haunted and literally fantastic: Keith Mole's often vicious guitar, and trumpet from Andy Diagram (of The Honkies, Spaceheads and, lest we forget, James), meshes with Thomas's wheezy melodeon. It's raw, spontaneous and direct in a tangential sort of way.

The warped sax shanty-like singalong of "Nowheresville" maps the co-ordinates of the strange terrain from where Thomas delivers this report — his melodeon clatters and wheezes like an old man's death rattle on "Fire". It's visceral and furlay — hardly what you'd expect from the instrument.

Potentially a Babel of competing samples, Turner's extreme drive towards clarity in the mix means that the differing textures — for instance, "Classical Piano" is slow fusion-style melodeon on bass and guitar and abrasive radio snatch of Arabic singing — form

part of a coherent aural stream. The clear, pastoral vocals of "Cut" take place within a violent electronic attack of bleeps and crackle, descending into faint radio and street sounds.

There's an uneven tussle here between lyrical narrative and vibrant, post-

"Morbid Sky" drives the chord sequence from Iggy Pop's "The Passenger" into a nightmare landscape. Thomas's megaphone-like voice—from another dimension ushers the song into distortion and feedback cacophony. And the coda has him singing "Under a morbid sky/The daylight never comes/Er", with the last word repeated in a tubular whistle that is unique and disturbing.

A later reworking of "Morbid Sky" is a baffling drum 'n' bass excursion with a sample of Thomas's wheezing voice fulfilling the same role that James Brown's "Sex Machine" whoop did on a multitude of House and Hip-Hop tracks. At times it sounds like the breakdowns are being slapped out by parras on knees. Maybe they are.

In the sleeve notes to the live CD *Pere Ubu retrospective* box set, Charlotte Pressler comes up with some illuminating comments on the early 70s Cleveland scene that spawned the group. She lived in the Plaza, the same rambling apartment where a number of Pere Ubu lived. She writes on the "deep rage" that runs through the early Ubu story. "It was," she says, "a desperate, stubborn refusal of the world, a total rejection; the kind of thing that once drove men into the desert, but our desert was the Flats (the industrial wasteland that was home to the Pirate's Cove venue where the nascent band had a residency)." That bloody-mindedness also provided the flash that still burns here through the tracks that appeared on Ubu's first three albums, *The Modern Dance*, *Delatank* and *New Pine Time*, as well as the "Delatank" EP and single, and 10 tracks from a 1978 live show. (The box also contains other, unreleased live performances, as well as *The Art Of Working* and *Song Of The Bailing Horn* albums.)

In the *Wire* 138, Ubu's music was covered about album-in an inclusive, detailed article by Mark Sinker. But a 1978 live reading of "My Dark Ages" gives a snapshot of the group in microcosm. There's irony, but not in the catch-all ironic stance of, say, The Pet Shop Boys. Ubu meant it all, but (no doubt aware of the contradiction) also leavened their sound with dark humour — "I don't get around don't fall in love much" sings Thomas in a bizarre parody of The Beach Boys' "I Get Around", in a song whose title also parodies Dylan's "My Back Pages". Tom Herman's slowly unwinding, ascending, slide-guitar solo cuts through the somber atmosphere, reaching a peak of such scalp-tinging intensity, that the whoop-happy audience are silent after it.

The box set also unearthed 18 tracks by various Ubu members' extracurricular groups and side projects, including *Rocket From The Tomb*, which featured Thomas and original guitarist Peter Laughner (who died in 1977). Their live version of "30 Seconds Over Tokyo" from 1975 is colossal. There was nothing like them. There's still no one like Thomas.

MIKE BARNES

Stockhausen sonic exploration. Recurring dramatics personae — Stevenson's quavering, RSC-style poetic delivery, Hadon's rich Iranian/Persian recitations, and the pseudo-pastoral yearnings of Bates and West ("A white blossoming peacock hawthorn dying her hair")

hmmm) — tip the album into sentimental voyage mode, where it occasionally coalesces in an ecstatic lyricism (the suspended, searing melodies of the canon: "Senai"). However, the general sweetness and obliquity of the changes (most of the tracks are only two or three minutes long) twist this potentially private arrangement out into a more public realm of cross-wired sonic information. A British nationalist fantasy soundscaped in the Interzone.

MIATT FFFYCH

Various Artists

Detroit — Beyond The Third Wave

ASTRALWEBS ASWB1170-2 CD/C2P

An album which can only be seen in the context of the work of the established Detroit Techno cabal — Atkins, Craig, May, Saunders, etc. — because, though a good record, *The Third Wave* depicts Detroit Techno as a form which appears not to have advanced since its inception in the mid-80s. The roll-call of contributors shows why. Sean Deaton, whose "Vortex" sounds uncannily like 908 State's "Pacific State", was himself schooled by Atkins and Craig after a stint designing label covers for Detroit labels DJT1000 (the moniker for the founder of Detroit's influential Generator label, Andrew Oldham) The Cosmic Messengers is the pseudonym for Stacey Pullen. Talk about preaching to the converted.

Ten years on, Detroit Techno is still using the same sounds and same studio tricks to conjure up those cold visions of urban and human breakdown. But what tricks they are. No other music can construct such a hypnotic maelstrom of rhythm or drag such lucid sexuality from raw electronic material. Like Miami Bass, which continues to recycle the tenets of Electro, *The Third Wave* presents Detroit Techno as a continuous loop of ideas rather than an evolving trend. The question then is, do you like Detroit Techno? If you do, then this album, from the New York-based Astralwerks label (who have issued FSCL and Seefeel Stateside in the past) offers another chance to reunite oneself with those peculiarly futuristic dreamscapes whose ideas have been stolen by many other genres but whose wholesale form has been left behind.

JAKE BARNES

Various Artists

Megatropolis

RUNNY PLACE PCD1 3CD/3MC

Megatropolis is a nightclub. When I was growing up, a nightclub was a place where grown-ups went all dressed up and got woozy while half-listening to some dodgy floor show. In a way nothing has changed, and yet nothing is the same, and every week Megatropolis run their "Shamanic tribal festival-in-a-club and new networking community". In one room, bearded bongo players strip to the waist and cavort in front of liquid slides, in another lasers pulse to the best trance Techno I've ever heard, there are market stalls, Tantric sexual workshops, live electroacoustic music. At the very least, the club is an urban thrill on a par with attending a Premier League football match.

Megatropolis is also a focus for many shades of new idealism and utopianism, the rainbow of anarcho-shamanic-cyberpace-anaroid-protest which is the radicalism of our times. It's easy to sneer at the cosmic pretensions of all this, and there's a musical comedy act called The Pot who do an excellent job of sending up "Sacred Techno". But only a jaded hardnut would fail to be moved by the sheer pleasure and warm vibes of the club itself.

The Megatropolis triple album is like a souvenir of the club. Gaily coloured and printed on tree-free hamp paper, the 64-page booklet is full of inspirational essays and quotes from present-day visionaries. There's a "DIRT Directory" of contact addresses, and I was interested to see that a magazine called *Plutocracy Connections* is published just down the road from my mum's house.

Each of the three CDs functions like a room within the club. "Dance" is a seamless mix by Richard Grey of 12 trance Techno tracks, culminating in a typically unhinged Casper Pound mix called "Two Full Moons And A Trout". The "Ambience" CD — well, you can imagine. Rain, shikahachi samples, a gentle jaccuzi of bubbling synths. A compensated wave recites "A Declaration Of The Independence Of Cyberspace" backed by a choir. And the third album, "The Shamanarchy Experiment", presents highlights from "seven-hour" psychedelic "exposés". A lot of the music is a modern form of Muzak, but always very warm, the

equivalent of a hug. Mixed in are the thoughts of prophets, usually elderly men with grumpy, echoing voices. "In the realms of Tantra eventually all the senses overflow, so you can smell touch, you can hear sight." *Wow!

CLIVE BELL

Various Artists

Platinum Breaks

METALHEADZ LONDON B26 783 CD/C2P

The Metalheadz label brings with it a certain character and distinction. Goldie, who set up and partly runs this home for an array of UK drum 'n' bass talent, dominates this compilation, from his excellent opening track under the name Ruffe Crew to his bizarre sleeve notes whereby he manages to describe every contributor as a superhero, conjuring up the vision of an army of breakfast X-Men doing battle under the Metalheadz flag (we know how these Jungles like their comics). Goldie's grandiose fictionalisation comes from the fact that the vast 17-track collection contains many of the best artists in circulation, including Peshay, Dillinja, Lemon D, Wax Doctor, Photek, J Majik, Hidden Agenda, Source Direct and the ubiquitous Alex Reece and his equally unavoidable "Pulp Fiction". *Platinum Breaks* truly does show how the label has built up a reputation, an attitude and a roster to envy.

The compilation treats a double track, with more "soothing" cuts by Photek, Dillinja and Goldie himself balanced against something a little rougher by Asylum and Digital, their differences representing the schism within Jungle between "Intelligent" and "Hardcore" sounds. The individuality of Photek's electronic experimentation, present here on "Consciousness", stands out, as does Dillinja's "The Angels Fall". Something for everyone then, even mere mortals.

JAKE BARNES

Various Artists

Tokyo Invasion Volume 1 Cosmic Kuroshi Monsters

VIRGIN TOKYO1 7243 6 41975 CD

The other day I saw the Japanese film *Maboroshi*, which I must be one of the queests, most understated films ever. The camera keeps its distance from the actors as though unwilling to intrude. I thought of this film several times while listening to *Cosmic Kuroshi Monsters*,

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Various Artists

War Smash Hits

SUB ROSA SOUNDS CO.

War? Smash Hits? The title and cheesy front cover might lead you to expect Balkan versions of "Low Rider" and "Me And My Brother", but the rest of the way card — the carefully reproduced artwork by Irwin of Laibach, the blank verse — promises a musical meditation on "the sound of a civil war." At the end of the CD, after the one good track and a long silence is an uncredited and disturbing surprise: more than eight minutes of what sound like field recordings of gunfire, panic and despair. *War Smash Hits* is the latest in a series of "Utopian Dances" by the innovative Belgian record label Sub Rosa. I acknowledge the ambition, but the juxtaposition of 'art' and real pain doesn't work for me.

"Earthing," the opening track by Kong, is a 12-minute suite of differently inflected rock riffs overlaid with difficult-to-catch spoken quotes by people at the Cralo refugee centre in The Netherlands. Padding out the time, with varying degrees of interest, are bubbling echoplex figures, page one synth washes, banal guitar lines, a cleverly manipulated string sample and a smeary jazz front-line.

For "Black Djinn Trance" the bass — Bill Lawwell or

Jah Wobble or both — alternates between dub grooves and a 10-note riff slightly reminiscent of a slowed-down "White Lines". The mix, overlaid with electronics by Tetsu Inoue and DJ Spooky, makes it seem more like a work in progress than a finished piece, and maybe that's what the dream team (which includes three Wire cover stars) intended. 11 minutes and 45 seconds of relaxed control room jammings that somehow relates to war. I didn't get it.

"Calling NY" by Silk Saw is even longer, less eventful, decorated by crackly radio voices, and with a tenuous feel. Are the dragging mechanical drum patterns metaphors for weary fighters or refugees on the long road to an uncertain future? Or merely evidence they should have spent longer editing the loops and repeats?

Laibach's closing track is the one that lives up to the packaging. Nasty, brutal and shorter than the other pieces, there is plenty of musical intelligence at work — it fizzes like a six-minute Herzog opera. Featuring singer Nanna Radovan, the piece is terrifying, dramatic, well-played (or looped, however they put it together) and mixed with conviction. "L'Homme Arme" sounds like the opening track of a more serious, artistically effective compilation.

JOHN I. WALTERS



Bill Lawwell

which presents 22 Japanese tracks from the exact opposite of the artistic axis.

What's going on in Tokyo? The piece is overdue for a major earthquake, and most of these groups are doing their best to simulate one. Track after track leaps headlong into blistering musical frenzy, lashing the fetal bolts of psychedelic guitar thrash and spraying the pus all over the mirror. *Kunshi* means suffering, and there's plenty of extrovert urban angst here, but two things stand out for me. First, the sheer excitement and childlike energy that drive the music. No one told these people that hard rock is dead, or that you're supposed to sit in a studio for months worrying about the sound. They play as if they discovered five minutes ago that amps can distort.

Second, they use sophisticated structure and rhythm. They don't stick to the romantic notion that if you're playing at high speed and volume, then each song must be a naked block of uniform sound. Swerving tempo changes, bursts of jaws harp and slide guitar, total shifts of adom keep you wide awake. Maybe the ultimate anti-chill album.

Conditions are difficult for these musicians in Japan — audiences are not so large and venues expensive to hire

But this collection (compiled by The Wire's editor Tony Hemmings) is a good guide around a scene apparently bursting with inventive energy. Melt Banana, Musica Transonic and Dem Sem Quaver are all here, plus The Boredoms with a typically hilarious "Pow Wow Wow". Four tracks are produced by the key figure Hopy Kamiyama, whose own group OpticalB conclude the first CD with an extraordinary 13 minute live workout. Legendary guitarist Kei Hano is represented both solo, with his mo Fushitusha and as a member of Vajra. Goro Zoro, led by sample-mester Otomo Yoshihide, who also appears on OpticalB's track, contributes an Opical of pace with a slightly Bill Frisell-like track from *Revolutionary Akeneuse Opera*.

This is an important compilation from a difficult-to-hear area, adorned by exceptional cover art by Savage Penol. My only complaint is a lack of a helping hand for beginners: The Japanese underground is a remarkably incestuous community, and if you're interested to know that the Musica Transonic drummer, Yoshida Tatsuya, also plays in Rums and Base Of Fiction, or that MT's bass player, Asahito Nana,

is also a member of High Rise, for instance, well, that kind of information is missing. But the absence of a focus on individuals serves to strengthen the impression of an overall musical scene, and provides a context for the live performances by The Boredoms, Melt Banana or Fushitusha that you may have seen in England.

CLIVE BELL

Jah Wobble

The Inspiration Of William Blake

ALL SAINTS AS 26 CD/CMP

The bones of William Blake have danced some strange jigs in the last year, not least when born-again Blake merl jigg Pop in Jim Jarmusch's whimsical trail through the Wild West, *Dead Man*. Blake's laurels are composed of offbeat tributes — a prose to Allen Ginsberg for his ludicrous, "the shepherd's been eating the mushrooms" album of musical Blake. However nothing is preparation for Jah Wobble prancing eagerly like a Blakean tot on Stepten Green, reading "Plying down the valleys wild" over a held synth chord and ethereal piano tinklings.

The inspiration Of William Blake ought to be a concept album with some dynamic music, instead it might fill a spot on Radio Four's Poetry Please. The bulk of the tracks consist of more or less straight readings of texts from Blake's *Songs Of Innocence And Experience* — "The Echoing Green", "The Angel", "The Chimney Sweep" — over different flavours of global chill-out grooves.

Latching on to a new age Blake of "innocence", "simplicity" and "truth" proves a stumbling block, as Wobble tries to convey the strength of his convictions via heart-felt readings, full of pity and gasping wonder. The pathos with which he cries "Speak father, speak to your little boy, or else I shall be lost" would make Leslie Grantham weep.

Considering Blake's Babylonian take on industrial society, alternative spirituality and biblical oracular tones, a marriage with punk and dub should have been made in heaven: a joint assault on the sleeping body of Albion. For a brief moment in "Auguries Of Innocence" Wobble delivers the condensed, surreally-charged rush of images with a cocky menace against a dark bassy groove. He even trills his 's John Lydon-style over lines like "who

shall hurt the little wren" But the ghost soon dissolves into a schoolboy performance

The musical accompaniment is no less literal. As Wobble wanders through London's chartered streets, his lip curling with 18th century distaste, the beat is a solemn edging footstep. Elsewhere the tuneful and joyful bass lines and sunny ambience are meant to evoke oneness — a balance of good and evil, yin and yang. A sequence titled "Breathing Out The World" and "Swallowing In The World" takes the narrative into global yog territory.

Blake's writings are fraught with dark energies and contradictory signposts. You can't dissolve the material tinctures into pills of goodness or iron the vision into a logo — "Honour William Blake, honour the truth, honour God" — without losing the sense of powerful struggle. Loads of ego-less goodwill, but in this Blake-like approach, "Tyger Tyger" sounds more like "The Lion Sleeps Tonight".

MATT FIFFITH

Bobby Zankel Trio

Human Flowers
CNP 103 CD

Frank Lowe *Bodies And Soul*

CNP 104 CD

Gregg Bendian Project *Counterparts*

CNP 105 CD

A selection from the first batch of releases on a new Cadence-associated improvised music label. However, where these albums are concerned, the 'improvised music' tag is a bit of a misnomer as they all derive their character from upfront writing skills.

Philadelphia-based alto saxophonist Bobby Zankel is none too well known here, though he's been involved with music since the 1970s and a stint in The Cecil Taylor Ensemble. *Human Flowers* has him with drummer Newman Baker and pianist Marilyn Crispell, who at the moment seems to be making albums as frequently as most people make telephone calls. Zankel's approach balances precise compositional ideas with a harsh tone on his instrument. It's sharp, unemotional music for its end of jazz and there's a tightness to the way in

which Zankel constructs his solos that is alternately rewarding and irritating. Barker delivers ambitious and lively percussion, and Crispell is responsive as ever, but the unvarying register of Zankel's improving tends to grate over the length of the CD.

Frank Lowe has led a career of undeserved marginality. He recorded for ESP in the early 70s and then for Black Saint and Soul Note in the 80s, working with Alice Coltrane, Sun Ra and Don Cherry along the way. Cherry is the album's main dedicatee, with four Don-related tracks. Fascinatingly, for a musician who's been associated with pre-bop influences, Lowe writes in the sleeve note of trying to convey the feeling of Cherry's ideas on phrasing and compositional structure. A good way into Lowe's method of working is through the two versions of "Don One", where a tune is played and pulled apart in two entirely different ways. Also rewarding, albeit extremely reticent, is the unaccompanied and affecting "Body And Soul", which utterly deserts the heart-sink provoked by seeing the title included yet again on a tenor saxophonist's album. An additional throwback to Ornette-related innovation is the use of drummer Charles Moffett (another under-recorded musician, still best known for his contribution to Ornette's *Live At The Golden Circle*). Moffett's still sounding sparky, and young bassist Tim Flood is far from overawed by the occasion.

The Gregg Bendian Project album features several New Music notables besides percussionist Bendian: Paul Smoker on trumpet and flugelhorn, Vinny Golia on clarinet, and Mark Dresser on bass. Bendian is one of the most resourceful percussionists around, particularly where pitch is concerned, but he manages to avoid an over-obtrusive role in these pieces. Check "Herald Days" for the incredible rolling underplay he sets up with Dresser. The compositions themselves are punchy, intricate little things, perhaps too fiddly at times. Again and again, the energy coalesces around the Dresser-Bendian axis, good as Smoker and Golia are incidentally. CMP is so dedicated to 'audiophile' sound that there's a note from the recording engineer with each CD explaining how it was recorded and justifying a sound which will strike many as odd, however "faithful".

WILL MONTGOMERY

in brief *classical*

Andy Hamilton hails creative composers incorporated

Arcado String Trio *Live In Europe* ANMT ANW 054 CD **Lu Chin Sung** *Past* TADK 12 7014 CD Contrasting products from John Zorn's labels. Arcado is Mark Dresser (bass), Ernst Reysiger (cello) and Mark Feldman (violin). It's not a jazz album, but the jazz background of the players comes across, especially in Dresser's jaunty rhythmic backdrop. At times they're like a less polite version of Kronos playing African pieces, and only on Dresser's "Lanette" is the jazz briefly upfront (bebop quotes and a Stephane Grappelli touch to Mark Feldman's violin). The audience were clearly enthused and so am I. Past from Hong Kong composer Lu Chin Sung is a remarkable achievement in post-Ambient environmental soundscapes. Sung plays percussion, guitar, synthesizer, vocals and created the tape-parts. Celebration of the machine is central in this collection of works from 1992-5, from the sawmill sounds of the opening track to the awesome later material. "Give Up" begins with an ominous loaded drumbeat, a technique repeated in "Treasure" where it builds into a fearsome wall of noise. These are terrifying visions in sound. "D The Blue" features sampling of harmonica playing to The Beatles and a babble of Chinese voices. Powerful and seductive.

Morton Feldman *Only new* ALBION NAB 05 on Soprano Joan La Barbara has specialised in wordless vocalising with Glass and Reich, and in jazz contexts. Here she sings works composed for her by "Morty" Feldman's later and very lengthy works have been documented on disc, and this album is designed as an introduction to his earlier output. The two longest pieces are *For Franz Kline* (1962) and *Pianos And Voices* (1972). By Feldman's later standards, Kline — for singer plus a small chamber ensemble — is packed with incident. Feldman asked for a 'pure' sound, without noticeable attack or fluctuation, and this places great demands on his performers in his desire to 'wash' a period of time with a general hue. His work compares with the 'colour



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Freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil, and enters the realms of sonic absurdity. This month: unearthing audio relics of Saturday morning kids' TV

"Who could forget these? 'Tra la la la la la la la, Tra la la la la la la la' 'Ho na na, gonna have a good time' This is a good idea maybe all elevenetees should print bits of the tunes that you're going to hear on the record! This particular album is called *Saturday Morning Cartoons' Greatest Hits*, and it's a collection of cartoon theme tunes played by American groups. We listened to all 19 tracks, and I think this 'Tra la la' business must be 'The Tra La La Song' from the *Bonanza Speltz Adventure Hour*, performed here with sneezing sang-rap by La Phair and Materski. Issue

Let me say first that the album is dreadful, apart from The Romantics, who play the theme from *Spider-Man* as though they just wrote it in the dressing room. Even I recognised "Sugar Sugar" from The Archies show, but Mary Lou Lord's half-baked drags sprayed with gratuitous guitar solos merely serves to remind you how great the original song was. There's also a version by Frente of "Open Up Your Heart And Let The Sun Shine In". This was sung by Fred Flintstone's tiny children, Pebbles and Bammi Bammi, and I actually saw the episode where they become infant rock stars. It was quite moved by this track.

But what really annoys me is all these musicians in the sleeve notes, nodding their heads and saying, yeah, we remember all those great cartoons. Yeah, we never did anything on Saturdays except watch drivel on the TV, and that's why we're all such cool slackers now. I have a real problem with joining this club — this idea that a

whole generation can link hands because they misspent their youth watching *The Jetsons* and *The Groove Goolies*. If they were real slackers, they'd be boasting about wasting the whole of Tuesday, not just Saturday morning.

But for me it goes deeper. I couldn't watch cartoons on Saturday mornings because we didn't have a TV. My parents were kind of anti-TV, but that was irrelevant, because we also didn't have any electricity. We lived at the bottom of a long, dark quadrangle of a lane in the deep south of England, cooking with Calor Gas cylinders and reading library books by paraffin lamps.

I sometimes wonder about the lasting effects of this upbringing. I still find it hard to be really happy in front of a TV set, and if I watch alone, melancholy creeps over me. TV certainly didn't bond me with my peer group. Our whole family used to listen to radio comedy on Sunday afternoons, but my memories of *Round The Home* and *The Billy Cotton Band Show* sadly don't open many doors these days. And I don't see any hip producers lining up bands to rework the themes from *The New Look* or *Play's A Laugh*.

But there's worse to come. The final, bottom-line reason why I didn't triller away my Saturday mornings was that we had bloody Saturday morning school. You ever hear of double periods of biology from nine am, tough guy? While Heather Grody and The Mummies were lying on the carpet watching *HR Pufstuf* (I definitely the coolest show going — how trippy?) I was dissecting broad beans. At least I failed the O Level.

Casting a romantic glow over your childhood is all very well, but personally I feel they let me out of a box when I finally became a grown-up. Last year I bought the first TV of my own, and the good news is that *Two Stupid Dogs* (Sunday mornings, around 8:30) is a pretty reasonable cartoon. It even has a funny theme tune: "La lu lu lu la la, two stupid dogs! La lu la la." □

field' canvasses of associate Mark Rothko. An excellent release.

Helmut Lachenmann Helmut Lachenmann 3 Solo Pieces *UWAS* MONTAGNE 107 7820 15 CD Lachenmann (born 1935) studied with Luigi Nono, and was influenced by his communist faith. The German composer's rejection of bourgeois music—manifesting of him to develop what he called an instrumental *musique concrète*, as here on *Pression*, for cello, where normal techniques are almost entirely avoided. The effects are sometimes intentionally comic, as on *Child's Play*, a set of piano pieces which refer to nursery rhymes and themes from Beethoven. Silence is another Lachenmann hallmark. There are parallels with the iconoclasm of Cage, but the intelligence is profoundly musical. Soloists are from Ensemble Recherche including the composer on piano.

György Ligeti *The Complete Piano Music Vol 1: Studies Books 1 And 2* as 783 on Ligeti completed his second book of piano studies in 1993, and Swedish pianist Fredrik Ullen gives them their premiere recording here, together with the earlier set from 1985. *Studies* originated as

teaching aids, focusing on particular techniques and problems, but since then Chopin poetry and technique have been allied. These sets by the Hungarian composer conform to the model of short but technically difficult pieces. The influence of Colón Nancarrow's player-piano studies is clear — much of the music is about as rhythmically complex as a non-machine can handle. Javanese gamelan and Reich/Rieser minimalism are other influences. *Worslow in Autumn* is a rare presto lamentation, *Arc-en-ciel* a transcendently beautiful meditation. They confirm Ligeia's status as a contemporary master.

Krzysztof Penderecki Polish Requiem CHAN005 1455960 2CD
Witold Lutoslawski Concerto For Orchestra/Ms-Parti CHAN005 1451010 2CD
Witold Lutoslawski Symphony No 3/Chantefablees Et Chantefablees 743 CD Classics from the two central figures in post-war Polish music: Lutoslawski's work debuts some key influences in modern music; Bartók in the early Concerto For Orchestra; Cage's chance techniques in much of his post-1960 music; and a French fastidiousness and delight in colour throughout. The dramatic Concerto gets a powerful

performance by Yann Pascal Tortelier and The BBC Philharmonic, but the highlight here is the masterly *Missa*: Taking its astatic approach from Cage the sonobars are shimmering. *Symphony in 3* is a one-movement work, tightly integrated by an insistent four-note motto. The soprano voice of Valérie Anderson flows through the atmospheric arrangements of Robert Desnos's poems about animals and flowers. *Chorégraphies Et Chorégraphes* from 1990, is its first recording. Since *Therapy: Jo Les Victims Of Hiroshima* brought him fame in the 60s, Penderesis has never availed the big theme, and the *Aequiem* is perhaps the most convincing large-scale result, continuing his neo-Romantic trend of the 70s. Subtly linked with the political programme of the Solidarity trade union, the dominant religious form implies a more traditional style, with textures sombre and often spare. The composer conducts The Stockholm Philharmonic, the 'Sanctus', added in 1993 and now recorded for the first time, powerfully evocative work.

Alfred Schnittke Concerto For
Three/String Trio F# 72435 55672
cd A stellar line-up: Mstislav
Rostropovich (cello), Yun Bashmet

André and Gidon Kremer (violin). They are fully equal to the demands of the extraordinary *Song Trio* from 1985. In his chamber music, perhaps like his mentor Shostakovich, Schnittke reaches his purest and most intense expression. A macabre motif based on "Happy Birthday" runs through the Trio — it was composed for Alban Berg's Cello — and its intensity is at times overwhelming. In the first recording of the Concerto For Three (1993), the players have a movement each and only get together in the brief and frenetic finale, to be silenced by a heavy piano chord in the first and only appearance of a pianist. In the welter of Schnittke recordings, this disc stands out.

Michael Torke Javelin ARGO 452
101 CD **Michael Nyman** Argo
Extra Time *vivagore* 50972438 4/15902
on Torke's minimalism is pretty, pleasant
and understanding if you like Easy
Listening! Meantime, there's a puzzle
Why is this vacuous music being
championed by New Music ensembles
like The London Sinfonietta and serious
labels like Argo? Torke's Javelin was
commissioned for the Atlanta Olympics,
and the album includes reissues of
'classics' such as *Adjustable Wrench*,

Green and Bright Blue Music: By chance, another second-generation minimalist has also written for a major sporting event — Michael Nyman's *After Expo Time*, released to tie-in with Euro '96. The music is more muscular than Yorke's, and more varied than Nyman's earlier output, though that's not saying a lot. There are hints of orchestral jazz in places, even echoes of New Orleans kaoo, but it's mostly the familiar bouncy rhythms and usual soloists including John Harle on sax.

Erikki-Sven Tüür *Ante Finem Saeculi/Symphony No. 2* **FINLAND** 4509 56679 CD Erikki-Sven Tüür was a rock 'n' roller before he affiliated with Arvo Pärt's Estonian brand of spiritual minimalism. These recordings have been in the vaults for nearly ten years and Tüür is now signed up with Pärt's label ECM. At age 38 it should be possible to say whether he's the new Arvo, but on the evidence of these works from the 80s, I'm sceptical. There are familiar Pärt-ish elements: bells, medieval voicings, minimalism, and also Stockhausen's avant garde vocalising techniques, but these haven't gelled into an individual style. *Ante Finem Saeculi* is an oratorio, but the crude, rock-based harmonies & movements II and IV jar, and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* rears its ugly head in the monotonously pulsing rhythms. *Symphony No. 2* is more consciously avant garde and impressive, but given its lack of development, the title is puzzling.

John Woolrich *Lending Wings* **AMC 0020** CD British composer John Woolrich, born in 1954, specialises in what he calls "machines for instruments". The title track, for 16 players and 32 percussion instruments, is, he writes, a "large mechanism... slowly cranked into life with a series of grinding gear changes", hectically accelerating before a final collapse. Spolozon's *Daughter* was a mechanical doll in a tale by ETA Hoffman. This deliberately creaking, quirky music that keeps emotion at bay, though the effect is often eerie and disturbing. There are affinities with the folk-inspired minimalism of Judith Weir, especially in the string quintet *The Death Of King Renaud* — not a 'mechanism' — performed by The Brodskys plus Jane Affers on viola. A spare and limited sound-world, maybe, but a strangely captivating one.

in brief **critical beats**

Peter Shapiro bodyrocks the latest club culture credos

Arakutuba Peter/Socrates **RS 80202** **FR** 2001 12" **Summit** **Blue Fire Celebrations/Use Bolitas Al Umbro** **RSAR 50013** 12" The *Arakutuba 12"* bears the fruits of London's Latino emporium Mr Bongo's excavations of Brazil's batucada rhythm remixed by The Balistic Brothers and Fika Brazilia. You'll begin to wonder exactly what the Bros did to earn their fee until an uninspiring faux Latin, Salsoul piano comes in two-thirds of the way through "Peke". Fika's dubbing up and blessing out bloco drumming doesn't quite scale the same heights as the soldering of Larry Graham to Jorge Ben on their monumental "Pots And Pans", but it's still effective. Ethno-Techno troupe Summit get the remix treatment from Nightmares On Wax, Easy Listening posse The Kaminsky Experience and Brains Unchained. The Brains Undrained mix of "Blue Fire" shows that they've listened to The Orb's reconstruction of Mahler's "Praying Mantra", while the Kaminsky mix of "Las Bolas" is what Ramsey Lewis with Brasil 66 would sound like.

EVA Oddity Godly/**Quincey** Bruce Lee MC/**Happy Campers** **No Mind** (The Zen Experience) **NANAI TUNE 2001 244** 12" Anything that kicks off with a Walrus of Love sample can't be bad. On "Oddity Godly" Barry White's wretched croon oozes into membranous, flanged synths and an airy drum break to create a track that is more soothing dub than hot buttered soul. After hearing the swirl of Orientalist zithers, a very funny application of Rammstein's "kick a hole in the speaker" sample and some kung fu lightning at the beginning of "Bruce Lee MC", take a deep breath and say "Amen". Happy Campers then bring it all back home with drum 'n' bass made from molasses.

Fauna Flash Should A Gentleman Offer A Tipanillo To A Jockey? **COMPOST COMPOST023** 12" **Sirens** Something/Browns *Avenue* **WBC RECORDINGS PHONO 12** Less obvious than most jazzy drum 'n' bass,



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Classic CD



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Julie Ann Giacobassi (English horn)

still movement with hymn
Pamela Frank (violin)
Paul Neubauer (viola)
Carter Brey (cello)
Christopher O'Riley (piano)

San Francisco Symphony
Alasdair Neale
CD 448 174-2

soundcheck

these two releases show that Fender Rhodes samples and liquid basslines don't have to be smarmy. With a title like "Should A Gertleman" how could Fauna Rack possibly go wrong? Well, "Sexual Attraction" is alarmingly oily, but, unlike the fatulence of too many Juno 106 basslines, the title track and "Post-Sunset Misunderstanding" feature bass that works more on a textural than a visceral level. On "Something" Sirens manage to curtail their Chick Corea impulses with slightly off-kilter dynamics and big, fuck-off Pete Cosey/John McLaughlin wah-wah to create a track that grooves in spite of itself.

Hawk & God Withan Acid Punk waxes (1999) 12" **Agent Provocateur** Sabotage (2001) CD, 2001 12" Two similar approaches to the new merger of funk and psychedelia. Despite the Hardkiss brothers' proclamation that "We don't use no 303/this is the next school", the rather excellent "Acid Funk" is as retro as the trainers on their feet. Next school, old school, new school, any school, it's still Acid House to me. The original version of Agent Provocateur's "Sabotage" is remarkably unpleasant, but the RnS Sex mix excels with its dubby atmospherics and stunted guitar theatrics. Meanwhile, Mekon immerse "Sabotage" in HiPop camouflage with bits of "Planet Rock" and "White Lines" to provide extra cover. If someone could weed mind and body the way Norman Whitefield did with The Temptations and Undisputed Truth, we might have something really interesting on our hands.

The Horn Rural Sex (Part 1) evolution (2002) 12" **Paul Johnson** Hear The Music (2002) CD, 2002 12" The music reaching process 12" has more bad puns than a Tommy Cooper routine (outgroup message "Dig the gastro-genital groove"). The Horn manages to inject a sense of levity into what is, in other people's hands, an all too often sour-faced mélange of Techno, Electro and disco. "Rural Sex" is an 106 where Shannon, Carl Craig, The Jonzun Crew and Mike Dunn manage to exist on equal footing. Chicago maestro Paul Johnson's cut-up of Unlimited Touch's Paradise Garage classic "I Hear Music In The Streets" couldn't groove more — they just don't make basslines like this anymore. The rest of the line

four-tracker is naked Windy City minimalism, and only slightly less intoxicating.

Runaways Playschool EP (2001) CD, 2001 12" **Les Rhythmes Digitales** Kontakte (2001) CD, 2001 12" Two releases that brilliantly reappropriate Easy Listening for New Age B-Boys. On "Finders Creepers" The Runaways (no, not Joan Jet's first group) conveniently weld some incidental music (with a mean oboe obligato) from The Avengers to a garbled beat. The remainder of this excellent EP features more than competent scratch-fests and more orchestral screwing around. I await their version of "Cherry Bomb" with bated breath. In Les Rhythmes Digitales game, Jacques Lu Cont gives DJ Vadim a run for his money in the theatological sweetpastes "Kontakte" features morbidly slow HiPop beats and deconstructed strings that wallow in deathlike pallor, while "Tropicano" is more of the same with the added feature of 4 Hero keyboard leads and Electro saugales until quasi-Junglist beats emerge. More buoyant than Jay Division.

Neil Sparkes & The Last Tribe Achtung Salami! (2001) 12" 12" **Mad Professor** No Man's Land (2001) CD, 2001 12" Achtung Salami! is stellar ethnodub dub from various incarnations of Transglobal Underground and Don Train. The title track is little more than sabbles, bass and merry strings, but it manages to eke out an unconventional sound. The threat, though, is "Wicked City" which manages to be propulsive at the same time as it screws with your head. "No Man's Land" is an inconspicuous B-side of a competent lover's rock track by Black Mjak. It's simple, pure, no-frills dub with Malcolm X samples to give its lovely sound an unnecessary ideological weight.

2-Player Sometimes Know (2001) 12" 12" "Sometimes" is a wonderfully groove trip through world-weary bass, binary beats and smoldering effects from Jan Tye and Daniel Pemberton. The flip features a soundclash with The Herbaliser who throws on an extra coat of fog for good measure, while "Secret Agent 3344" is drum 'n' bass with a foul hangerover

in brief new jazz

Will Montgomery throws a curve into the jazz margins

Blowhole Following Sheen (2001) CD, 2001 12" Blowhole appear to be a loose nine-piece collective working in a idiosyncratic way that brings a casual, lo-fi (almost Trout Mask Replica-like at times) ethos to improvisation. Cheese-grater guitar, crumpling edifices of percussion, mangled jazz remnants — it all goes into a pot cooked up by musicians working in separate studios in Tucson and Seattle. A couple of live pieces show some of them can also make their fabulous, ill-disciplined racket when in the same room at the same time. They deal in an uncomfortable, scratchy extremity which shows an utter contempt for bombast. Long may they continue to irritate.

John Butcher London And Cologne (2001) CD, 2001 12" A collection of solo saxophone pieces from Butcher, mostly recorded live over the last couple of years. The only studio piece, for four sopranos, is perhaps the most impressive work. For seven and a half almost eerily logical minutes Butcher develops an improvisation working almost entirely with sounds outside the conventional soprano sound spectrum. Close-mixing becomes an art-form in itself. The other pieces feel similarly painstakingly mapped out in terms of actual sound, besides being fearlessly inventive as improvisations. It's rare indeed to hear such focus on the grain of each statement and it's what makes this album so essential.

Ginghiale HooBeats Of The Shorting Swine (2001) CD, 2001 12" A set of intense reed duets from the Chicago direction Ken Vandermark and Mars Williams (both linked with the NRG Ensemble and numerous other Chicago ventures) are flexible multi-instrumentalists and play as if something musical is at stake at every moment of the improvisation. There's a brash, unselfish aspect to what they do and, crucially, a kind of punk feel — not meaning thrasherism, but the virtue of scepticism. Extended techniques are judiciously deployed within a scheme that

knows about ferocity but seeks to fit it into a broader picture. They're serious about taking the language of the reed instruments into new territory and that's precisely where they're going.

Collective 4tet The Roped Dancer (2001) CD, 2001 12" An album of clearly-articulated free jazz. The 4tet comprises Mark Henman on piano, Jeff Hoyer on trombone, Hans Gesser on percussion and William Parker on bass. The sound is notably good and the group continue to play with fire and direction. Henman is an incisive player and his playing seems marginally dominant. The dialogue between his chordal play and Parker is fascinating. Gesser is a good listen, too, with a light touch but razor-sharp reflexes and devilish facility with the cymbals. Hoyer makes slightly less impact. In the end, of course, this works first and foremost as a collective effort, and a remarkably cohesive one at that.

Ken Field Subterranea (2001) CD, 2001 12" In May 1995, Field, a member of Birdsong Of The Mesozoic, who has also contributed music to Sonosme Street, shut himself in subterranean vaults beneath an "isolated artistic structure" in a New Mexico field, along with alto sax, flute and sundry percussion instruments. Most of the music on the CD comes from multitracked improvisations he made during that period. The acoustic is lively and the music engaging, in a winning, repetitive sort of way. Though one might expect the musical equivalent of fingernails scraping walls, these are buoyant pieces — looping percussion overlaid with unambiguous melodies. Field isn't interested in developing complex improvisations, more with multitracking simple but suggestive blocks. Energetic, folksy, charming.

Gerry Hemingway Acoustic Solo Works (1993-94) (2001) CD, 2001 12" Solo percussion records are unlikely to reach beyond devotees, but it'll be a shame if this doesn't catch a few ears. Not only is it a recent record, it's also a substantial statement about the possibilities of percussion: a set of carefully sculpted compositions which entirely repay close attention, without being as daunting as that might sound. Perhaps the most compelling pieces are the newly reissued

"Trance Tracks" and "Trance Tracks 2" — irresistible body music, each limb beating a different pattern in whirling, overlapping circles (influenced, according to Hemingway's notes, by both West African and South Indian drumming). The album as a whole is hugely challenging, but never far from a powerful, physical pulse. And the live track, dedicated to Art Blakey, is lovely

The Jack Brothers *Coltrane King* sussex records sals02 cd Humour's not dead. Not in Sweden, anyway. The Jack Brothers are a sax-drums-electric bass/guitar trio. *Coltrane King* is a preposterous tribute to the Meditative One, powered by catty rock-eh bass and with a complete lack of tact. It could be gloriously throwaway but it's a bit more than that. "Africa" sounds as though it is accompanied by The Gitter Band's rhythm section, "Nana" is played as Polly Harvey might do it, "Acknowledgement", that emblematic moment of rapt spirituality, takes place in front of a clattering funk-drummer backdrop. It's played with such verve and conviction that the group's claim to wish to imitate the intensity of Coltrane's music seems feigningly credible. Bless 'em for trying

John Law *Pentecost* fuse music records pnr 27 cd **Verzany Weston** *Playing Alamo* acta 9 cd Two rather different albums from British pianists. John Law's *Pentecost* is the second in a trilogy of improvisations based on early monastic music. Law draws an analogy between Pentecost and musical inspiration, and the piece is a single long improvisation on a psalm for the feast day on which it was recorded. The Holy Spirit is here conceived of more as down than fire, and despite some sag over the 51 minutes, the album convincingly builds on the spare beauty of the theme. By the end it has revealed its way into the skull and taken on an unshakable solidity. The Weston album is a spiker affair. Recorded at home, and alone, it shows the listener with broken rhythms and jagged phrases. The ghost of jazz occasionally comes into focus through the brambles, but the governing theme seems to be in the smirg. Weston's master at delivering his punches just before or after they might be expected to land. Also impressive is the launtness of the thread that binds left-to-right-hand melodic invention. Lovely

stuff which should help raise a still undensened low profile

Evian Parker/Antonello Salis/Mauro Orselli *Improvisazioni* acta 02 11 cd Parker in the company of pianist/accordionist Salis and percussionist Orselli. The trio have produced a surprising and diverse album. Parker is so to be heard in full flood with the thrashing energy of the third improvisation, which breaks into a strident and harsh-sounding, unaccompanied soprano passage. On the other hand, the fifth piece is achingly tender and slow. Salis sticks mostly to piano but the accordion pieces are fascinating, the quicksilver darting of Parker's tenor making a peculiar fit with the lush, unwieldy accordion

Paul Pimley *Everything In Stages* sussex sals 1510 cd Canadian pianist Pimley is an imposing talent, and witty and pointed in his writing. What impresses about these solo pieces is the joyous clarity of the playing, which strays enormously stylistically without losing a basic sense of focus. The compositions are ingenious types, with Pimley attacks with improvisational vigour. They also come from a space where, as on one track here, he's happy to fuse Conlon Nanarow with Webern — a space where the 'influences' washing about in the background go from Bach to Beefheart, but somehow remain within a kind of over-arching, jazz-derived framework. The album comes as a playful, enigmatic CD, allowing users with the necessary hardware to build an interactive Pimley 'composition' of their very own

Paul Rogers *Heron Moon* sussex music sus 02 cd an album of solo bass from Rogers, a musician of idiosyncratic forces, and an imposing live performer with the knack of getting through to people who don't normally listen to improvised music. It is perhaps this communicative energy that makes his music so compelling. However he's playing — long arc drones, rapid runs all over the fretboard, percussive effects — there's an unapologetic physicality to his work. Check the denuded tractor engine midway through the "Song Time" cycle for an idea of how far out he can push his instrument. There can't be a huge market for solo bass albums, but those who take the leap won't be disappointed. □

Label distributors & contacts

Further consumer info labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers such as Rough Trade, These, Piccadilly, Death Charge, etc. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, Cargo, RTM, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, Harmonia Mundi, SRD, Kudos, etc.

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Warner Brothers through WEA
Warp through RTM/DISC

print run

New music books — read, raved about, roughed up

In this month's books section:

A graphic account of the ECM story; a minimal study of minimalist music

ECM — Sleeves of Desire: A Cover Story

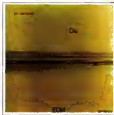
LARS MULLER PUBLICATIONS (Pbk \$29.95)

The first ECM cover I ever saw gazed quently back at me from a shop display wall, enigmatic as a Rothko canvas on a freeway hoarding. Surrounded by such 'choice' pieces of 70s design as Return To Forever's *Romantic Warrior*, the sub-Roger Dean splendour of *Visions Of The Emerald Beyond* and several 'ironically' glibly Zappa covers, Ralph Towner's

within most design disciplines, and music was poorly served by its companion media. All the more remarkable, then, that Manfred Eicher, ECM's founder, should bring forth a label with such rigorous graphic identity at that time.

This book documents the history to date of the ECM graphic style. It includes a complete chronological catalogue of their cover graphics from 1969's *Fire At Last* by The Mal Waldron Trio, to 1996's *Three Men Walking* by Joe Maneri, Joe Morris and Mat Maneri, plus some unpublished alternative designs and photographs. The survey of work is interesting on several levels, principally as a document of a singular and influential graphic vision, which has steadfastly resisted and ultimately transcended other passing fashions in design, but also

high praise. What this book really does is document the skill with which the label has forged a remarkable parallel between the feelings imparted by the graphics and those expressed by the music. The best covers here place one in a mental/emotional framework predisposed and sympathetic to the music within. This is done with a syncretism which no label copy or press release can achieve. In short, it bypasses the need to rely on the clumsiness of text (dancing about architecture, etc.) in the overwhelming avalanche of stock at your local megastore, a new ECM disc by an artist you may not know is instantly recognisable, thus neatly sidestepping the problem for most labels of introducing and identifying new artists and releases. The minimal, evocative



Diary had a cool, formal austerity which was irresistible. I soon discovered most of the catalogue up to that point was identifiable by the focused uniformity of this graphic aesthetic. The music within these packages seemed to match with uncanny precision the distinctly European modernism of their design. The 70s was a period of monumental disjunction

as a close analogy for the development of ECM's musical identity over the past quarter of a century.

Love it or hate it, ECM has forged an undeniable place for itself in recording history — and not only in jazz and contemporary classical musics. There are persuasive arguments which position the label as a musical genre all to itself, in which ECM jazz and contemporary recordings resemble one another more than anything from their respective parent territories. Depending on your sympathies, this could be a criticism or

photographs and immaculate sans serif typography merge, even from the hopelessly diminished scale of a plastic CD box, to cast a sense of solemn authority. Of course, the appetite for such relentless tastefulness can be satiated by too much of it, and it pays while going through this book, to remember the real context for each of these designs is not surrounded by acres of similar material but lurking amid the hundreds of ill-conceived monstrosities from which it will provide such compelling relief.

For those who too easily dismiss the achievement of such a generic identity, it is worth remembering the attempt made in the 70s by the Windham Hill label to emulate ECM's success in this area. With a rudimentary understanding of the basic design ideas employed so successfully by ECM's central team of Barbara Würgler and Dieter Rehm, and of Escher's musical aesthetic, Windham Hill released albums of 'cool ECM music in equally 'cool ECM packaging. Needless to say, they stank. Ironically, they were instantly recognisable as WH product because the emulation was so clumsy, the typography so awkward and the music so self-conscious. This only served to make ECM's house aesthetic appear even more accomplished. Since then, only a handful of labels have managed the feat of melding music and graphics with such compelling longevity. Vaughan Oliver at 4AD, Peter Saville at Factory, and Ikuo Miori at Tzadik spring to mind.

This is a very beautiful book. As a piece of book design it is faultless: gorgeous paper, proportions, etc. The typography dances across the sleeves and pages like the most assured and economical of Jon Christensen's cymbal figures, and the reproductions contain a thousand inherent lessons for designers and photographers in any medium. There are also several rhapsodic tributes in essay form which contain interesting information I have two small reservations. Firstly, the scale: while the essays often bemoan the transition from LP to CD, with its unfortunate effect on the potential impact of the designs, the publishers have produced a book whose dimensions limit the reproductions to CD size. Secondly, the title: *Sleeves Of Desire*, a truly awful tag which is saved only by the perfect typography, which enables you to see it purely as a pleasing configuration of lines. Unfortunately the blessed union of image and sound at ECM has never quite succeeded in elevating the taste to the same dizzy heights. Minor quibbles, though: this is a very desirable publication.

PAUL SCHÜTTE

Minimalists

By K Robert Schwarz

PRINCETON: UPK, £14.95

The last few years have seen the archaeologists move in on the burial ground of minimalist music. Out-of-print discs have been excavated (Steve

Reich's *Four Organs*, Philip Glass's *Music With Changing Parts*), and forgotten figures rediscovered (most notably, Phil Niblock, Charlemagne Palestine and Tony Conrad). The reductive rhythms and drones of minimalism continue to echo, most obviously in Techno and Electronica. Radical musicians (Alan, Ryoji Ikeda, Bernhard Günter, J.Jat, Jim O'Rourke and others) continue to draw inspiration from minimalism's super-distilled economy of means.

Edward Strickland, in his 1993 book

fail to 'get' minimalist repetition, perhaps it's because they're still listening to it as if it were some kind of 'music', as if localised concerns like progression and narrative had any relevance.

K Robert Schwarz seems to have paid little attention to any of this. The rediscovery of minimalism's rich history has exploded the myth that there were ever only four 'major' minimalist composers (Terry Riley, Young, Reich and Glass), but Schwarz sticks to this tried old line. Bestseller Reich and

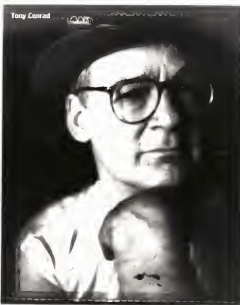
make romantic appointments more pleasurable and those at the dentist a little less dramatic."

For what it is, *Minimalists* remains competent, and in spite of the flaws, it easily held my attention. It makes the differences in philosophy and personality between the various composers clear, and a carefully plots out musical influences (Young, for example, owes much to environmental sound, Gaseku, Anton Webern, John Cage and Charlie Parker). The close early ties between Reich and Glass are as well aired as subsequent disputes. Unfortunately, it's all rumble history, lacking both the thoroughness and the illumination that Strickland brings to the area. Even Wim Mertens's terminally dry *American Minimal Music* did better, with an attempt to explore the implicitly regressive politics of repetitive music's ego loss.

The commercial imperative behind *Minimalists* is understandable, but its unwillingness to acknowledge a wider history is unforgivable. Schwarz buys into LaMonte Young's self-mythologising without question, and hugely important (if sometimes understated) minimalist innovators such as Conrad, Palestine, Pauline Oliveros, Alvin Lucier and Rhyx Chatham don't even make it as footnotes, let alone equally deserving musicians like Yoshi Wada, Paul Panhausen or Arnold Dreyblatt. Schwarz fails to take his own quote from Glass to heart: "When I came back to New York [in 1967] I would say there were roughly 30 composers working in a very similar style. Unfortunately, the media has concentrated on a handful of people and I think it's not been fair." Brian Eno, David Bowie and John Cale are the only pop music inheritors of minimalist technique to get a mention.

Perhaps Schwarz is right to draw from minimalism in his approach: keep the story simple, avoid straying from the path. On the other hand, the reason even the most extreme minimalist experiments retain a visceral appeal today is the complexity their modest means engenders: the dance of harmonic overtones in a Young drone, or the infinitely intricate polyrhythms in Reich's tape loops. Many halos of minimalism have suffered from a narrow focus, and *Minimalists* is a squandered opportunity to redress the balance.

BRIAN DUGUID



Minimalism: Organs, mapped the web of influences from minimalist visual art (the monochrome paintings of Ad Reinhardt, Frank Stella, Barnett Newman and others, or the simple geometric sculpture of Donald Judd or Carl Andre) into music. If Robert Rauschenberg's all-white paintings were the clear inspiration for John Cage's nominally silent "33", then Stella and the others clearly prefigured LaMonte Young's immobile drones, as well as the pattern-based sound geometry of Terry Riley's *In C* or Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*. If many people, even gung-ho avant-gardists, still

Glass each get two chapters in this new book, while Young and Riley have to share a bunk (Schwarz largely ignores their music after 1970), and only John Adams, Meredith Monk, Michael Nyman, Louis Andriessen and Arvo Part get to share the dormitory. The page count seems tied to record sales, although perhaps this is appropriate at a time where the once unloved and unlistenable sounds of minimalism have become the ad-man's favourite blend of compulsive drive with inoffensive placidity. A wristwatch advert explains "Its melodies composed by Philip Glass

multi-media

Rob Young downloads a cabinet of audio curiosities

An evening's random trawl through the Internet can throw up a whole range of musical archives. Websites, free software and other knickknacks relating to the underside of musical activity. Here's this month's choice of places to go, people to see and music to mutate on the Net.

Irdial Records

<http://Penny.amiPCUG.CO.UK/~irdial>
One of the best record label sites, and much more than just an on-line CD order form, Akin Fernandez's Irdial site contains reams of info relating to the use and abuse of power and technology, non-Luddite anti-digital propaganda based on the disposability of CDs (motto: "analogue adored, digital devalued"), teasers for their upcoming *Conet Project* (recordings of secret messages and bizarre transmissions via shortwave radio), and a huge image archive of analogue synthesizers and

Chaos To Musical Composition". As an adjunct to the site, there's long essay by Bruno Degazio that repositions Joseph Schlinger, a forgotten scientist, as one of the most important musical figures of the 20th century. Schlinger, an associate of the maverick Russian inventor Nikola Tesla (whose alleged discoveries of cheap energy sources have been the subject of many a crank conspiracy theory), apparently used to use early fractal generating programs to create some of the first computer music. According to Degazio, "His System of Musical Composition was a unique, perhaps misguided, attempt to discover the atomic structure of music, the smallest indivisible element, the simple ground from which all complexity emerges".

Faust Machine

<http://www.adweb.co.uk/andyw/faust/index.htm>
Fine-looking repository of material relating to the nascent Krautrock collective, with record sleeves, downloadable pictures, and music press articles dating back to the group's early 70s inception (including this from one John Peel in 1972: "It's really music born of a technological age in

which there is neither time nor room for sentiment"). But there's more: a crude "Faust Machine", which you can grab off the site for your own use, allows you to remix the group's latest recordings à la Jim O'Rourke.

Negativland

<http://surate.unc.edu/ah/negativland/>
For "luncheon pranks", this is a surprisingly clearly laid-out site, and especially good for a well-rounded debate on the subject of intellectual



property and issues raised by sampling and electronic retrieval systems. (This wouldn't have anything to do with the fact that the boys got sued by Island for their U2 release in 1992, would it?) You can access information on the group's extraordinary public-access radio broadcasts. *Over The Edge*, read up on the latest editions of US Congressional White Papers on copyright law, and — best of all — read a complete transcript of a telephone interview between Crosby Bendix and U2's The Edge, where they ask him to loan them \$15,000. Oh yes, and of course you can also order those not-in-the-shops *NegLand* CDs here too.

SoundHack

<http://music.colors.edu/pub/SoundHack/>
This site lets you download a small but perfectly formed application for desktop soundbending. SoundHack is a sampling device in miniature, and absolutely free. If your Mac has a CD-ROM drive, you can load in a short section from a standard CD. Once you've got your chunk of sound, you are free to reconstruct it in a pleasing variety of ways, using sound filters that sound more like Ambient dub tracks — Convolution, Mutation, Spectral Dynamics, Spectral Extractor, Phase Vocoder — and save the results for use as a conventional sample. Or to use as an error message instead of one of those internal computer beeps.

Fall Lyrics

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~kandell/falllyr/2.html>
Here you'll find the lyrics to every single Fall song, painstakingly transcribed, by ear, by Arizona-based Jonathan Kandell (and a bunch of friends with equal amounts of time on their hands). The lyrics are reproduced by agreement with The Fall's Cog Sinister office, and are presented in a spirit of philosophical inquiry. "When I say that hrrrude is the precondition for the oscillations between authority and inauthenticity," writes Kandell in his Preface, "I mean to make the claim in the transcendental, Kantian sense that I think Mark E. Smith employs." Sock with the lyrics.

Music Unbound

<http://www.munb.com>
This site provides a forum for debate about the ways in which musics are being narrowed and eroded by commercial concerns such as radio, traditionalism and marketing demographics. It's still in its infancy, and at the moment is focused largely on the classical and jazz end of things, but the articles reproduced here — such as Dan Krimm's response to an article by Wynton Marsalis on defining jazz — display a healthy sideways look at music's commodification, and call for companies, media and radio stations to recognise the impossibility of categorising musical forms. Why do the words 'snowball' and 'volcano' spring to mind? □



drum machines. Typical soundtrack "Permission is granted to e-mail us"

Fractal Music Project

<http://www-ics.usi.uni-stuttgart.de/people/schulz/musac/>
This site contains applications and sound files that let you create and hear music generated according to chaotic principles and fractal generators such as Mandelbrot patterns and the Fibonacci sequence, plus essays on the subject with titles such as "An Application Of Granular Synthesis And

new notes at a glance

information from SPNM

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september

6

Voyages Exotiques:
Nancy Ruffer, flutes;
Hugh Webb, harp
Takt, Takemitsu, Keely,
Willcock*** Yun**, Ghin**,
Parlen, Taira**, Shankar
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 0181 341 6073

7-14

**Vale of Glamorgan
Festival**
Ind. Plant, Torms, Spass,
Vesko, Kutusovic
various venues on Cardiff and the
Vale of Glamorgan
01446 759848

7

**Sibelius 7 music
processor
demonstration**
British Music Fair, Earl's Court,
London 01223 302763

*9

**SPNM Education
Project Showcase**
Sven-Tuur, Pannap, new
works by pupils from
Stanwell, Bryn Hafren,
Usurbild Fawr and Barry
Boys schools***
Llanidlof Four Comprehensive
School, Vale of Glamorgan
01446 759848

12

**Nick Hayes, clarinets;
Sean Gregory, piano**
Improvisations***
BASIC

12

**Bridgewater Hall
Opening Concerts:**
Halls
Adams*** Adžić**
Adams/Debussy, Stravinsky
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester M2
0161 907 9000

15

**A Journey Among
Travellers: Kathryn
Bennetts & Peter
Borman, recorders**
Bousted, Wander van
Nieuwenk, LeFau,
Diancan-Philidor, Telemann,
Hesse, Gibbons, Baldwin, C
Ball*** Maute
Royal Opera, New End Square,
Hampstead, London NW3
01852 723379

14

**Colourspace Music
Festival**
Burt, Stockhausen,
Anderson, Desorgher,
Linnick, Butler, trad
drumming
Clapham Cinema
0181 763 9298

16

Lake Piano Trio
Beethoven, Josephs***
Shostakovich
WH

17

**LSO Autumn Season
Opening Concert**
Sibelius, C Matthews***
Beethoven
AH

19

Polymetrics
Finney, Tempel, Michener,
Stack
BASIC

20

Appartment House
Hilbert**, Powell*** Cage,
Crane*** Wolff**
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 0181 832 4201

21

Screen Extravaganza
Phelous, Fenton, Torma,
Wesman, Gunning, Davis,
Goodwin
RPHI

21

**Winter is icommen in:
Queldryk Chamber
Choir**
Ayres*** trad American arr
Ayres
St James' Church, Sacre
Gardens, London W2
0181 598 2254

21

**Sibelius 7 music
processor
demonstration**
Leeds 01223 302763

21

**Colourspace Music
Festival**
Bogmark, Radeke
Clapham Cinema
0181 763 9298

22

**Colourspace Music
Festival**
Cowdrey
Clapham Cinema
0181 763 9298

24

**Jeff Moore and
Brian Mullian, violin
and cello duo**
Englishby*** Betros***
Moore*** Kozlky
BASIC

25

Celebration of Song:
Sarah Leonerd, voice;
Andrew Ball, piano
Britten, Bridge, Lutyens, PR
Bennett, Swayne*** Solomoni
PR RPHI

25

Nash Ensemble
Gerhard, Stravinsky, de Falla
WH

26

**Paspappa Autumn
Season 1996**
Albergs, Gerhard,
Runchak*** Paredes***
Royal Northern College of Music,
Oxford Road, Manchester M13
0161 273 4304/0161 273 5334

28

**Phiharmonia
Orchestra: Music of
Today**
Gerhard
RPHI

28

**Unknown Public
Holiday**
Peyton Jones, Reich,
Wolken, Dylan, Pook,
Partridge, Blyars, Wishart,
Edwards, Zappa, Dearden,
Harvey, Parsons, VSub,
White, Collins, Feil, Eyeless
in Gaza, Mentel, Globo
QEH RPHI

29

**BBC Symphony
Orchestra**
Matthews*** Jenkins
RPHI

30

**Steve Reich and
Musicians**
Reich***
RPHI

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Stratford Place, London
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0171 499 8567

PR RPHI:
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Festival Hall, London
SE1
0171 960 4242
QEH: Queen Elizabeth Hall,
Royal Festival Hall,
London SE1
0171 960 4242
RPHI: Royal Festival
Hall, London SE1
0171 960 4242
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THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

david toop

takes his axe to avant garde radio and cybercult hippies

Currently prone to nightmares, I wake in the dark with heart-stopping crashes into consciousness, hearing — out on the far horizon of perception and fading fast — an unmistakable murmur of BBC radio, the voice of recovered English, that comforting drone of indoor life in a cool wet climate. For any number of reasons, this is horrible. I'm on the side of the Dalia Lania and John Peel when it comes to the proposed vandalism of the World Service, but despite that, outside of a few inspired legal DJs (Peel, Steve Barker, Cockcut, etc) or the crazed amateurism and haphazard reception of pirate stations, I can't stand radio. I don't want radio on my radio, let alone radio in my bad dreams.

A number of people I respect love to have that Radio Three, Radio Four thing plinking, warbling and waffling in the background, perky announcers mmmrolling their rrrrs and giving it the alpine dynamics, microphone plays and invisible soaps still hammering away with the same old sound effects, sportscorers, traffic reports, news on the hour, playlists and all the rest of it. Why such

virol is aroused in me I cannot say, except for a speculation that mainstream radio serves up a subliminal division of the hours, coloured by social positioning, that I have no wish to share.

There is a resolute excitement to radio that I won't deny — American Grifts, Texas-Mexican border radio, short wave, pirate, three hour live mega-mos and the more deranged phone-ins — but everything else seems to function as a displacement of internal voices. Maybe that's the secret. Kick out the incessant chatter of silent conversation with your own self. Get a DJ or radio play in your head, instead. Radio as meditation substitute.

(Sweeping statement warning) I get a feeling from radio of nostalgia and parochialism. People locked in a windowless room, speaking into a microphone, perpetual tunnel vision induced by the pressures of a sound-enclosed medium. If you stop talking, then there's nothing happening, right? What does inspire me about radio is a suggestion of panic, of invasion, of invisible warfare, monstrous transmitters pumping fire music, dubious health products and pizza orders over national borders or legal boundaries, jammed transmitters, evil propagandists. The colourful *Border Radio* by Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford reprints a photograph of dapper Dr JR Brinkley, a radio surgeon and border radio mogul who travelled around Kansas in a sound truck, "Ammunition Train No 1 — Heavy Artillery" painted on the side. Brinkley performed billy goat gonad transplants as gland cures for the spermatically challenged in the 1920s but fell under the axe of the American Medical Association.

Thrilling stuff. I'm not particularly gripped, however, by avant garde visions of radio as a forum for experiments in sound poetry (despite having done a bit of that myself in decades past), the 77 Sunset Strip image of a 60s hostess walking about, finger-clicking to the thin rattle blasting from a pink plastic transistor, seems more radical in its lifestyle vacuity than a bunch of bearded weirdos grunting into studio microphones.

But after all this revolutionary transmission comes the blanket torpor of radio in the 90s. The contradiction of long-range parochialism has a parallel with the Net, and as others have noted, the claims for and against radio at its inception were just as wild as recent claims for the Internet. The subject and imitations of Mark Dery's book, *Escape Velocity — Cyberculture At The End Of The Century*, arose during a lunch the other day. I'd picked up this book, being impressed with some of Dery's

magazine pieces, but was amazed to find him drawing borders around so-called cyberculture, the shape of those borders bearing a strange resemblance to America. "This book confines its scope to the United States," he writes, "for the simple reason that the US has been synonymous, almost from its inception, with technological progress."

Is that a simple reason or is it just the fact that most of these cyberculture theorists have never travelled much beyond their own neighbourhood? Whatever, Dery fixes on Trent Reznor and Elliott Sharp as prime examples of information age cybermuse. No disrespect to Elliott, who is a talented and inventive musician, but it's not exactly Dillinger we're talking here, is it? Maybe we should be grateful to Dery for quoting Bruce ("who has sported an earring and a spiky, David Bowie-esque hairstyle") Sterling's immortal words: "I talk rock slang, because it's part of the gig." Like, groovy with the rock-a-boogie, Bruce, man. And what I want to know is this: if Sterling is so fucking post-human, then why hang on to the 70s sideburns?

What it is, is frighteningly dated: cyberculture at the end of the middle of the last decade of the century but not quite making it to the beginning of the second half. For instance, whatever happened to smart drugs (sc)? As for the alleged infatuation with 'axes' — this notion of the beleaguered Apple Mac as rock axe is just silly putty. I imagine wannabe cyberpunk writers stocking 'THIS MACHINE KILLS' on their computers, just like Donovan did on his acoustic guitar.

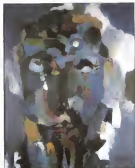
Dery even writes about the authenticity of punk performance. I saw The (Magnificent) Silks play live and shambolic at the Vortex and I'm not sure if authenticity quite captures the essential qualities of that experience. Gustafur Viv Albertine sincerely believed that shouting "1-2-3-4" at the start of every song was a requirement of proper punk behaviour rather than a musical device. Authentically punk, I'll concede, but not quite matching up to the anarcho-monster template.

What these cyber-writers, artists and *flâneurs* subscribe to (or once subscribed to, according to Dery's account) is a pitiful fantasy of speed and power that the best punk groups — the totally incompetent and directionless ones, in my opinion, as opposed to The Sex Pistols or Clash — were totally and gratefully unable to master. Really, the cyberpunk ideal was better encapsulated by Plagiat than by Eater. From that, you may extract whatever inferences you wish. □



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